

***Scenic Design for Shakespeare's Pericles: Prince of Tyre Ball State University***

***Department of Theatre and Dance Spring 2018***

**An Honors Thesis (HONR 499)**

**by**

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**Thesis Advisor**

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**Ball State University**

**Muncie, Indiana**

*May 2018*

**Expected Date of Graduation**

*May 2018*

**Abstract:**

The works of William Shakespeare have captivated an audience of countless millions since he first put ink to paper. Innumerable directors, dramatists, performers and designers have taken on the challenge of bringing his stories to life. I feel honored to have joined the ranks of those artistic visionaries with my scenic design for Ball State University's Spring 2018 Production of *Pericles: Prince of Tyre*. The plays of William Shakespeare are incredibly human. That is to say, they are full of universal experiences, things that touch the core of our being and that we can all relate to in some way. It is for that reason these works have stood the test of time. The timelessness of these works allows for a fantastic amount of conceptual interpretation. Our production of *Pericles* was about the motion of life, loss and reunion, and the idea that the destination of life is the journey through it. The show was conceptually grounded in the idea that the actors were like children playing a game of make-believe.

The set was designed to be an imaginative space for play. Because of the large amount of travel in the show, the set needed to be as versatile as possible. It found its shape in actor manipulated fabric and ropes that were reminiscent of both nautical motifs and children building sheet forts.

**Acknowledgments:**

I would like to thank Kerry Lee Chipman for being my advisor on this project. Her guidance and instruction over the last three years has been invaluable in my education as a designer and collaborator.

I would also like to thank my entire production team:

Lighting Designer - Mickie Marie

Sound Designer - Alex Brock

Costume Designer - Grace Wylie

Hair & Makeup Designer - Julia Weidner

Technical Director - Garod Cavannaugh

Properties Master - Aubrey Krueger

With Special thanks to my director, Karen Kessler.

## Process Analysis Statement

As with any design process here at Ball State, the production team for *Pericles: Prince of Tyre* began with a director's concept meeting. Here our director, Karen Kessler, gave us her thoughts on the show's theme and the message she wanted to convey to the audience through the performance. Karen wanted us to consider that the play is about loss and second chances, the love of one's family, and a universal journey through life. She also wanted the story to be self-aware, in that the audience should recognize the actors as such, not just as characters. It would be as if the acting company were children playing a game of make believe, and that the gestural costumes they donned were the characters themselves. The first period of research and rough design stemmed from that meeting, and was the framework on which my design was built.

The largest challenge I faced in the early design process was creating a unified mechanism that was versatile enough to become all of the major world locations – Antioch, Tyre, Tarsus, a ship at sea, Pentapolis, Mytilene, Cerimon's Home, and Diana's Temple. We wanted to focus on the motion of life through the show, so scene shifts had to be flowing and appear fairly simple to keep focus on the story, and not on the scenery. As a result, I took a semi-minimalistic approach to the show and limited each location to one major gesture. The early research period let me establish what each location was meant to feel like both to the audience and our characters. I made a list of adjectives to describe each place, then tried to marry that feeling with an architectural gesture befitting the physicality of each location. For example, In Antioch, there is a secret withheld and a riddle to solve. The answer hides in plain sight, and Pericles uncovers the mystery. Antioch is the palace of a king, so a grand gesture was needed. I decided that it might be fitting to have a large sheer curtain, or many that would

veil the space and obscure the room like a physical manifestation of the secret, only to be pulled away to reveal the unadorned truth.

In the preliminary design phase, we solidified our decision to build the scenery from large panels of actor manipulated fabric and hempen rope. The panels and curtains would be hung from the grid at approximately 17' in the air on 50' long traveler tracks that bisected the playing space diagonally. In addition to ease of transition, the panels allowed us versatility in shaping the various environments. It was during this stage of the design when I began drafting the space with the computer assisted drafting program Vectorworks. The drafting file allowed me not only to begin making technical drawings for the build process, but it also allowed me to generate 3D imagery of the set that I then used to create full color renderings of each of the major scenic locations. These renderings were instrumental in displaying my ideas to my director and other members of the design team. It allowed us to have in depth discussion on the inner workings of the design and how the scenery would move and progress through the show. It was also during this period that I built a white model of the set in  $\frac{1}{4}" = 1'0"$  scale. This also served as a visual aid and allowed the director a scalar physical representation of the set to work with and further incorporate the scenery into actor's blocking.

As we moved into final designs, further revisions were made on individual scenes and I worked with the rest of the production team to establish viable locations for onstage storage of props and costumes that the actors would be using throughout the performance. Drafting was refined to reflect changes and was given to my technical director so that the build process could begin.



I feel as though my work, in concert with that of the other designers, rose to meet the challenges of this play and brought to life the vision our director had for this production. The production relied on the acting company to execute the scene shifts as their characters. The results were often hilarious, but sometimes starkly beautiful. The scene shifts provided a bit further insight into the secondary characters, and commonly provided opportunity for physical comedy. Those bits of action between dialogues helped to remind the audience that the show was of an intentionally presentational nature.

Over the course of this process, I feel like I have grown immensely as a collaborator, designer, and a technician. Because of minimalistic qualities of the set, so much of what it conveyed was reliant on the other designs. And that statement is true of any show- the design areas always inform one another and combine to create a mood for the overall production. With *Pericles*, however, it felt that the design elements were more closely married than any other production I've worked on at Ball State. They needed to be in order to tell the story clearly and effectively. I worked closely with the lighting designer, Mickie Marie, to shape the fabric panels and give him plenty of surfaces on which to experiment with.

I've grown more comfortable with taking risks as a designer. Until we built the fabric panels and got everything in place, we were honestly unsure of how well they would move along the tracks, given their elasticity and minimal weight. In addition, we weren't sure whether they would have the translucent quality we wanted to be too opaque. There were a great many factors about the curtains that we couldn't fully understand until they were in the space to work with. Given that the curtains were the predominant scenic element, that choice felt like a large risk to take should they not work at all. There were, of course, a few challenges. One

such obstacle was that the carriers which held the curtains on their tracks made far more noise than anticipated. The technical director and I worked out a noise dampening solution and applied them to each carrier. Another challenge we found was that over the course of technical and dress rehearsals, the curtains stretched under their own weight, causing them to drag on the stage floor. They were routinely trimmed to prevent any associated tripping hazard.

As a technician, this production gave me the opportunity to work with equipment I had never encountered before, and taught me skills I would not otherwise have. Because of the large and customized nature of our sheer curtains, we had to order the fabric in bulk and create our own soft goods from scratch. It was tasked with creating 6 panel curtains measuring 4.5' wide by 17' tall in addition to a curtain, slit at center to create a doorway, measuring 36' wide that was also 17' tall. This project prompted me to use an industrial sewing machine to sew and hem them, as well as hand grommet their webbing to provide attachment points for the carriers.

*Pericles: Prince of Tyre* was a fantastic opportunity for me to grow and learn with a team of accomplished students and faculty. I am thankful for the challenges this project presented me with and even more so for the collaborators who helped me to find truly creative and elegant solutions at every turn.

### Bibliography

Hamilton, Ann. *The Event of a Thread*. 2012, Park Avenue Armory, Wade Thompson Drill Hall.

Shakespeare, William, and Alfred R. Bellinger. *Pericles, Prince of Tyre*. Yale University Press, 1925.

# PREFACE:

- The Slideshow that follows is a visual record of my journey through the design process. It is presented in three stages, encompassing a period of research and rough design, revision into a preliminary design, and further refinement into a final design.
- Director's Concept: Our production of Pericles was about the motion of life, loss and reunion, and the idea that the destination of life is the journey through it. The show was conceptually grounded in the idea that the actors were like children playing a game of make-believe.

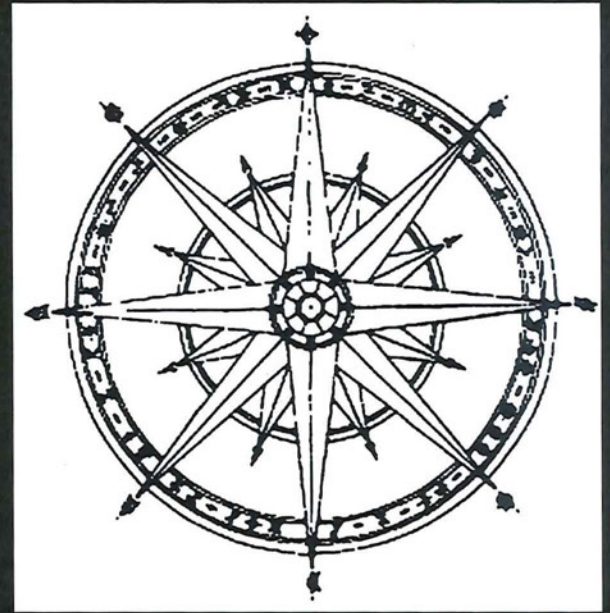
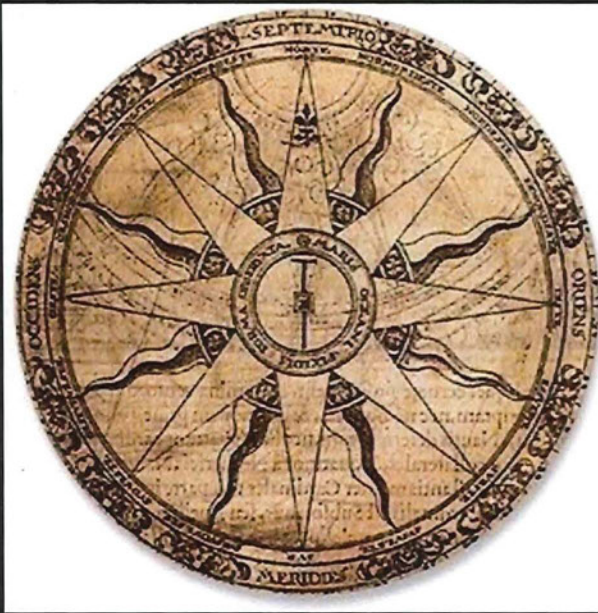
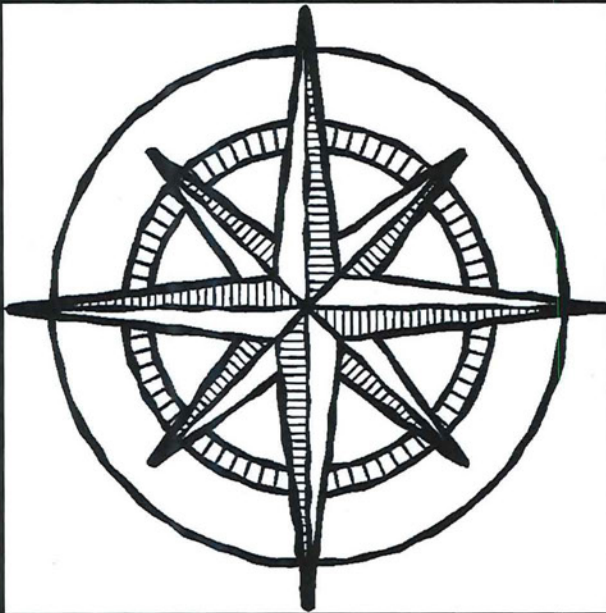
# *Pericles Prince of Tyre*

Research and Rough Design



# Journey

The Compass Rose is emblematic of not only Pericles' physical journey, but of the way in which he finds his way again. It is a tool by which the lost may find guidance.





# Travel

To emphasize the movement through the story from location to location, I'd like to employ the use of grid-to floor china silk curtains. Each piece would be approx. 54" wide and could be moved as a single piece or as a group. Varying setups would provide the visual framework of our different settings, both indoor and outdoor.





# Antioch

Veiled, Enticing, Artificial





# Tyre

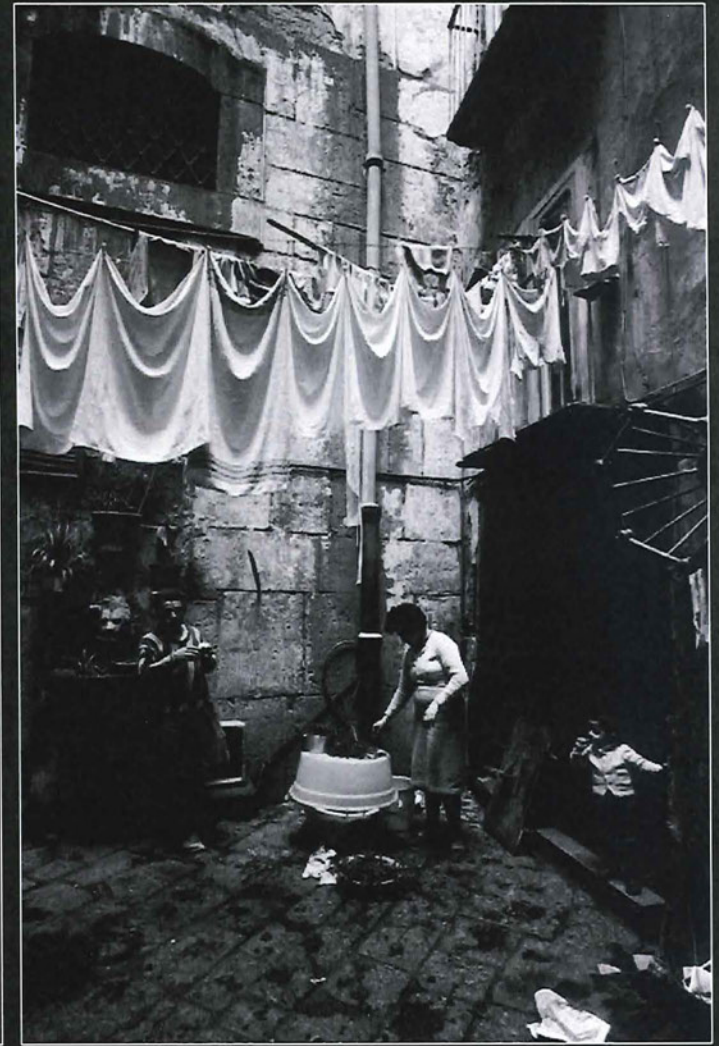
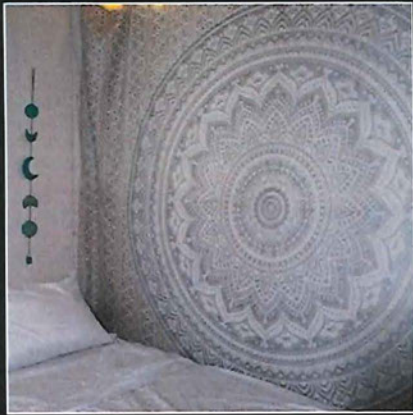
Welcoming, Stable, Secure, Warm





# Tarsus

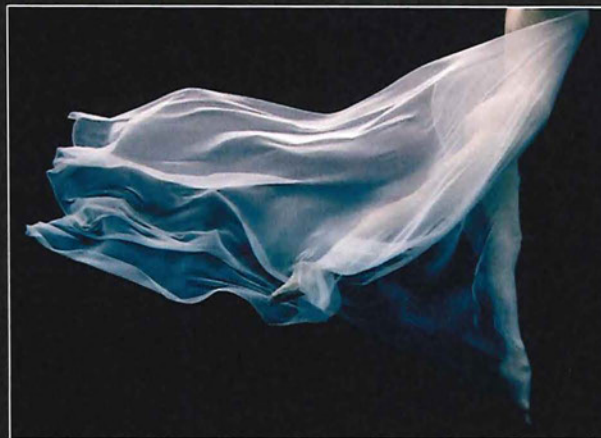
Emaciated, Sallow, Derelict





# Pericles' Ship (Wreck)

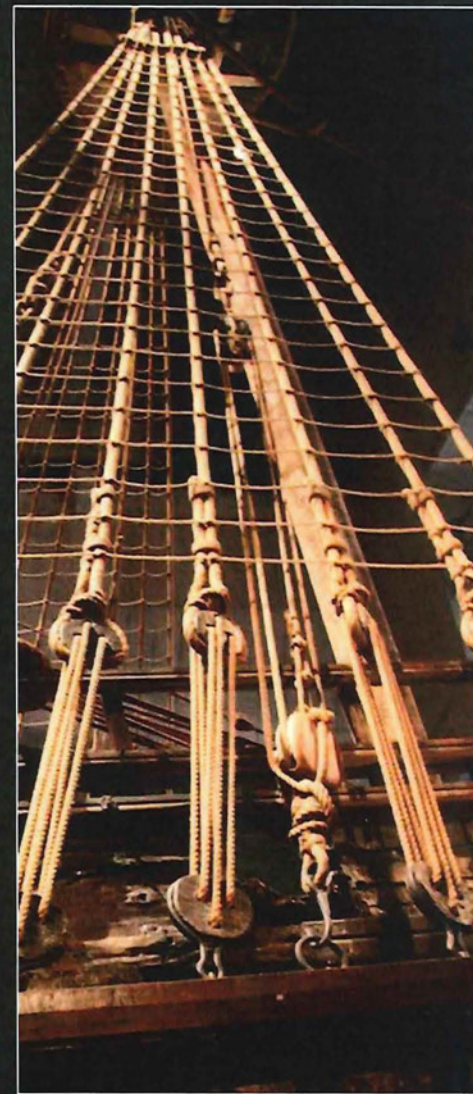
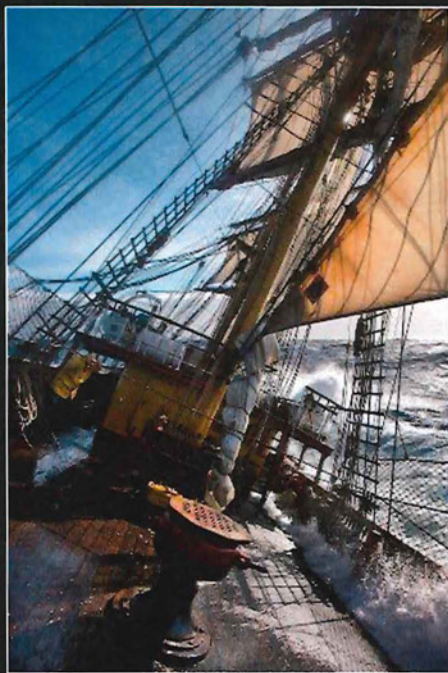
Tempestuous,  
Windswept





# Pericles' Ship 2

Stalwart, Resilient, Strong





# Pentapolis

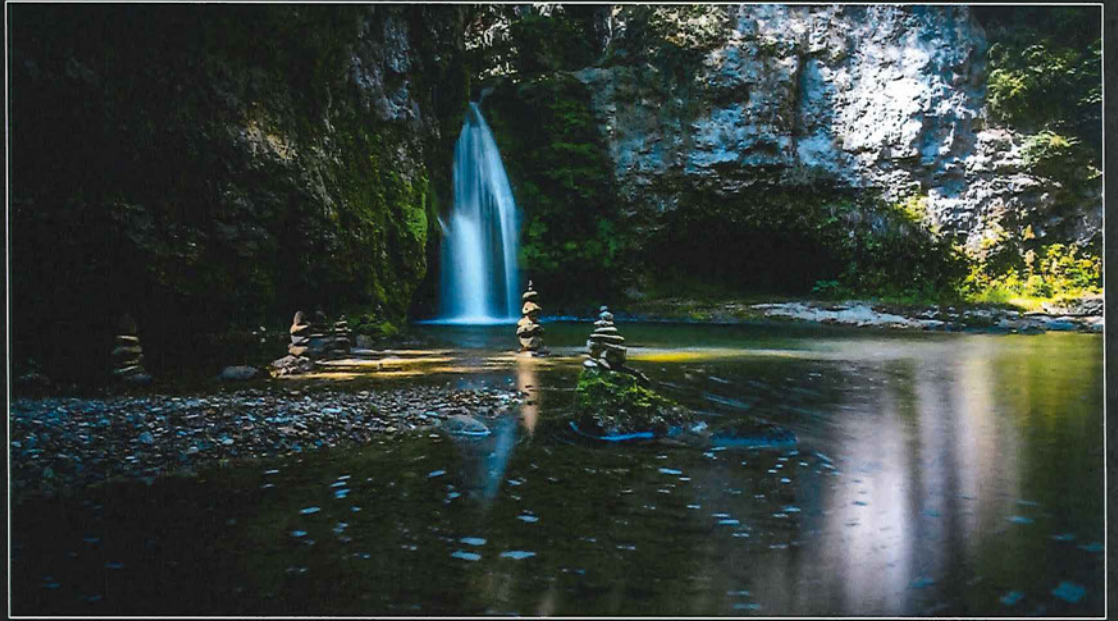
Inviting, Celebratory, Bold





# Ephesus

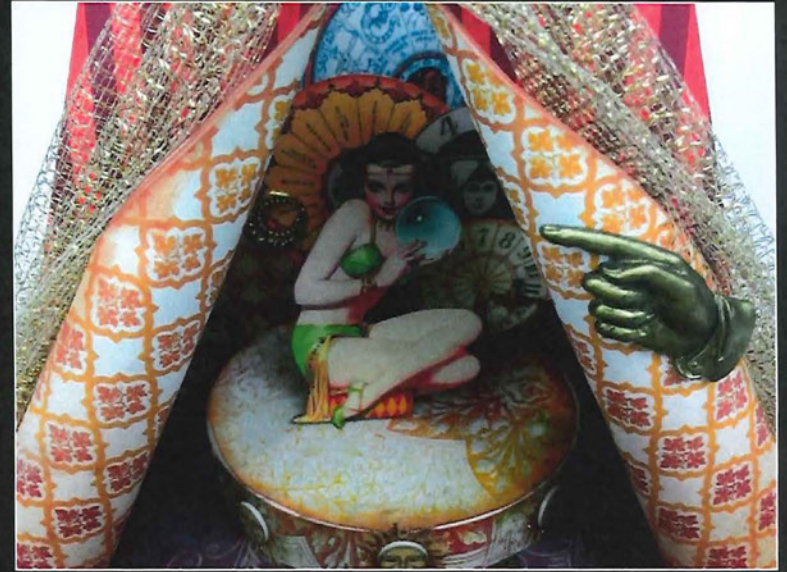
Mystical, Ancient, Serene





# Mytilene

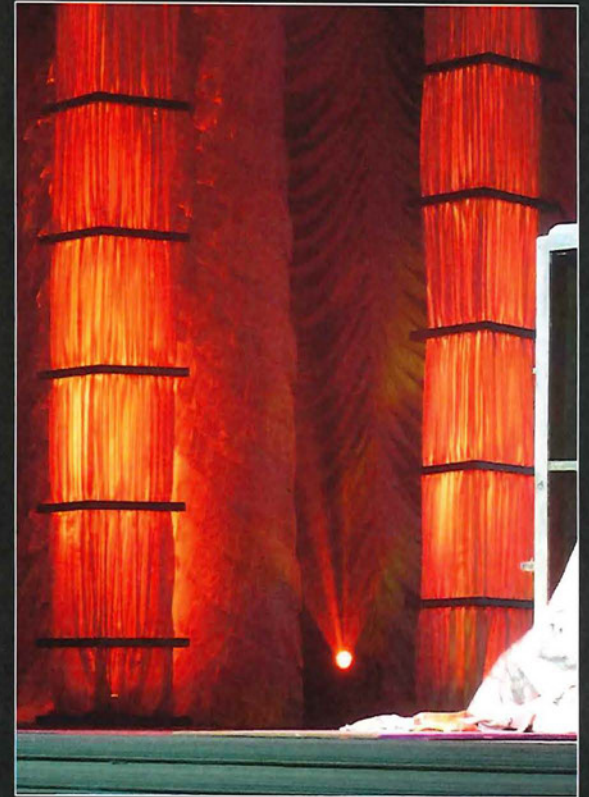
Smarmy, Unwashed, Seedy





# Temple of Diana

Orderly, Pure, Elegant

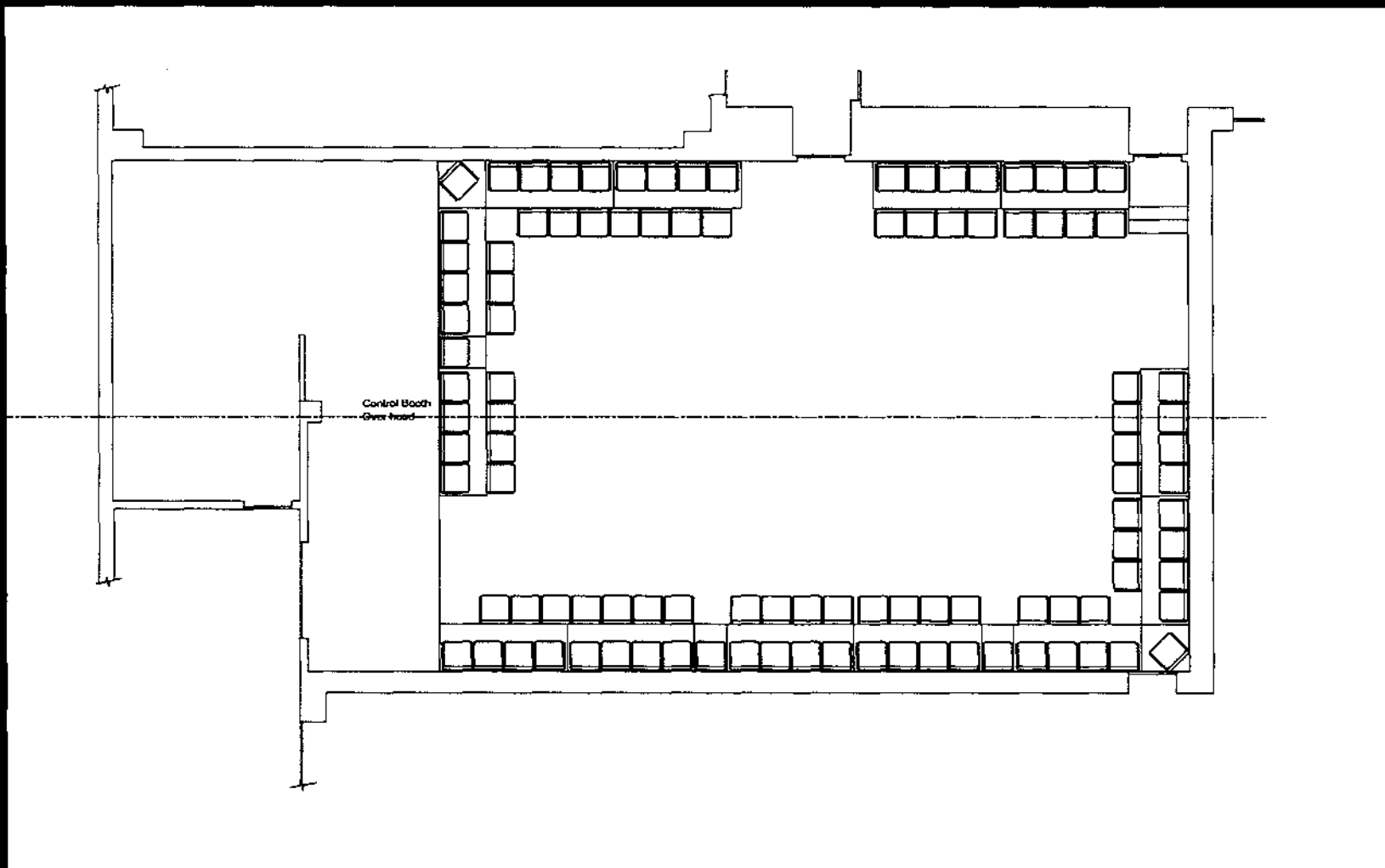


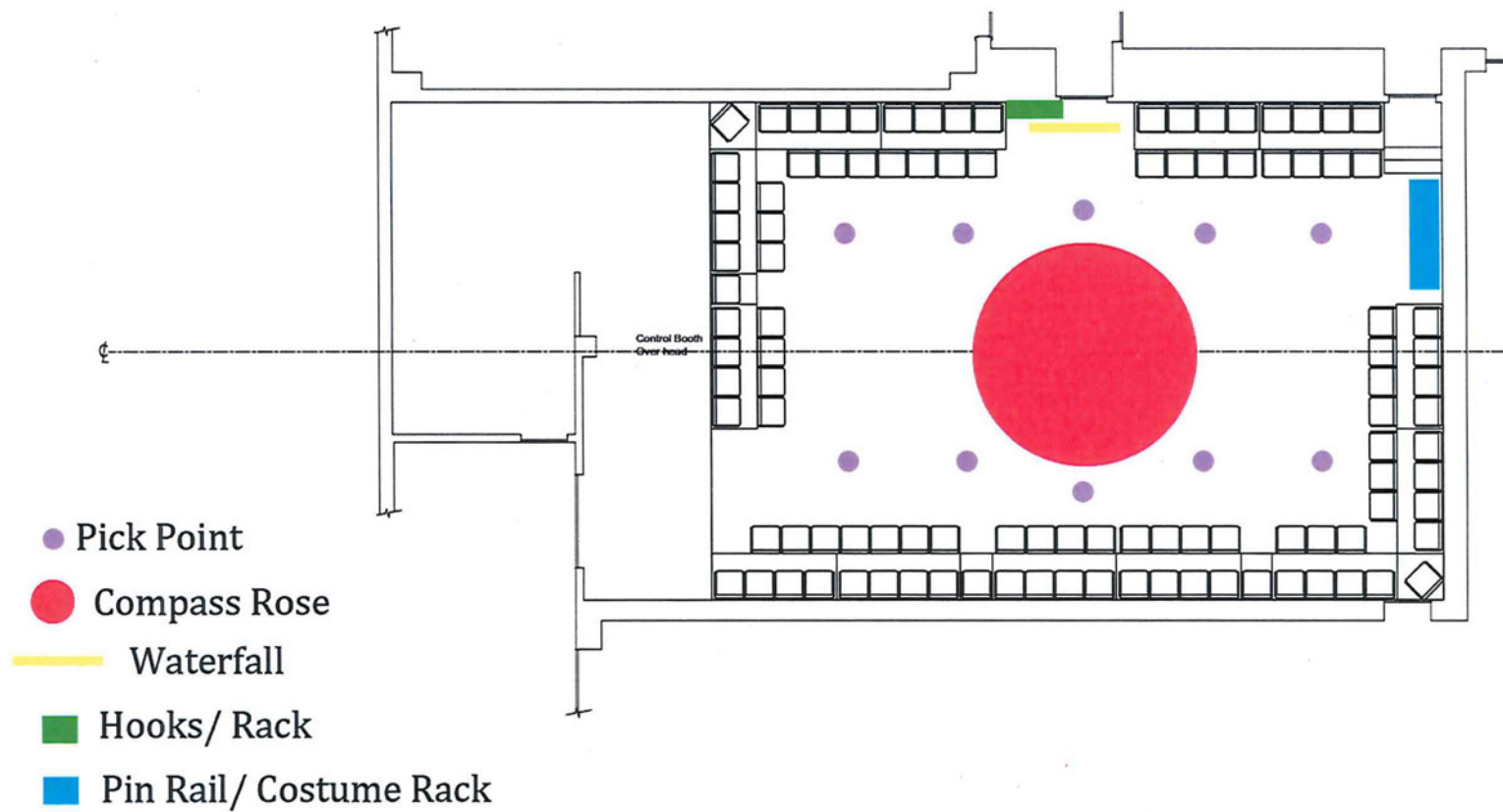


# *Pericles: Prince of Tyre*

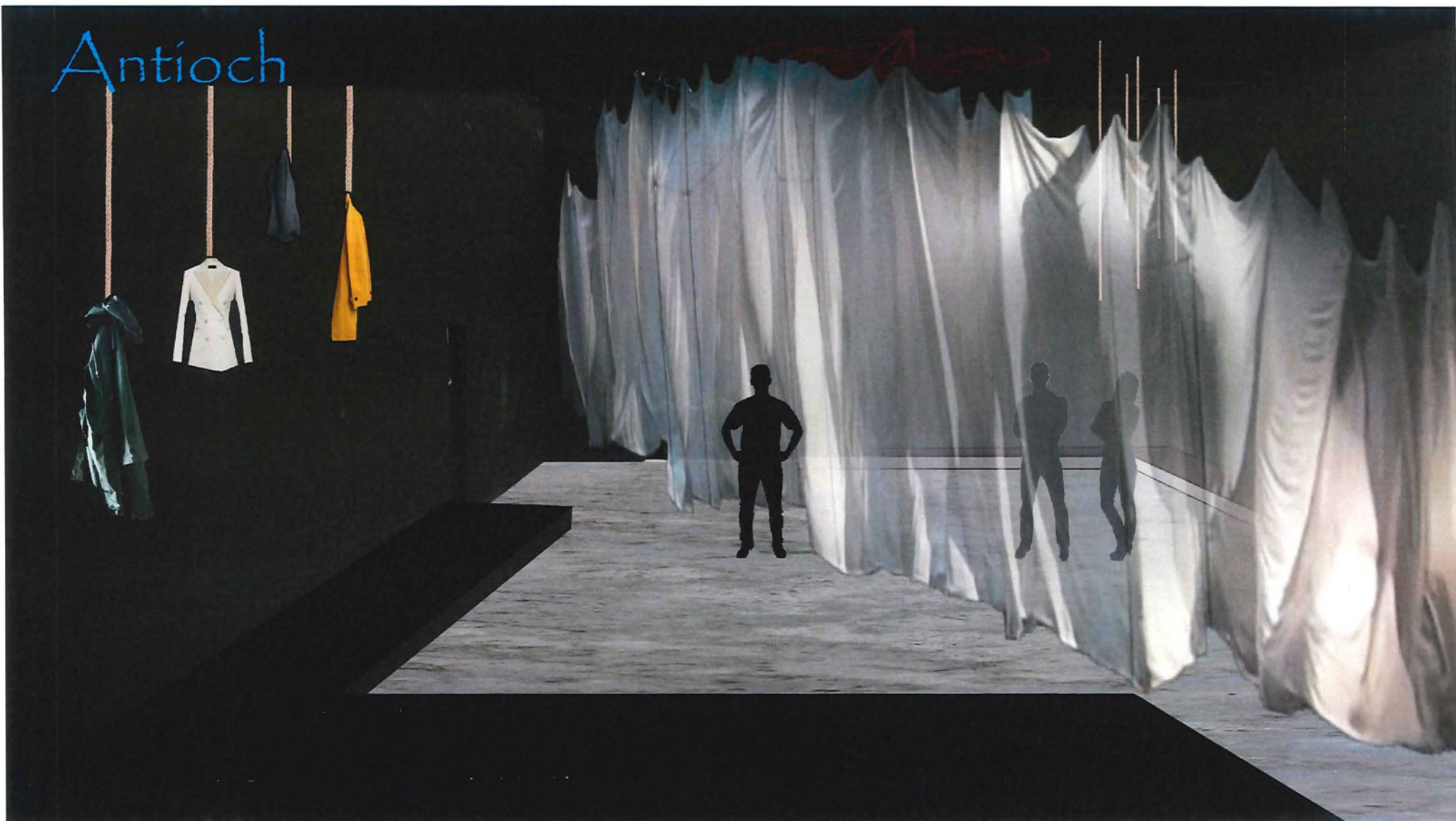
Preliminary Design

\* The following renderings and drafting plates for the Preliminary Design phase were based on views generated from a 3D drafting packet-the final version of which will be included in the “Final Product” portion of the Capstone.



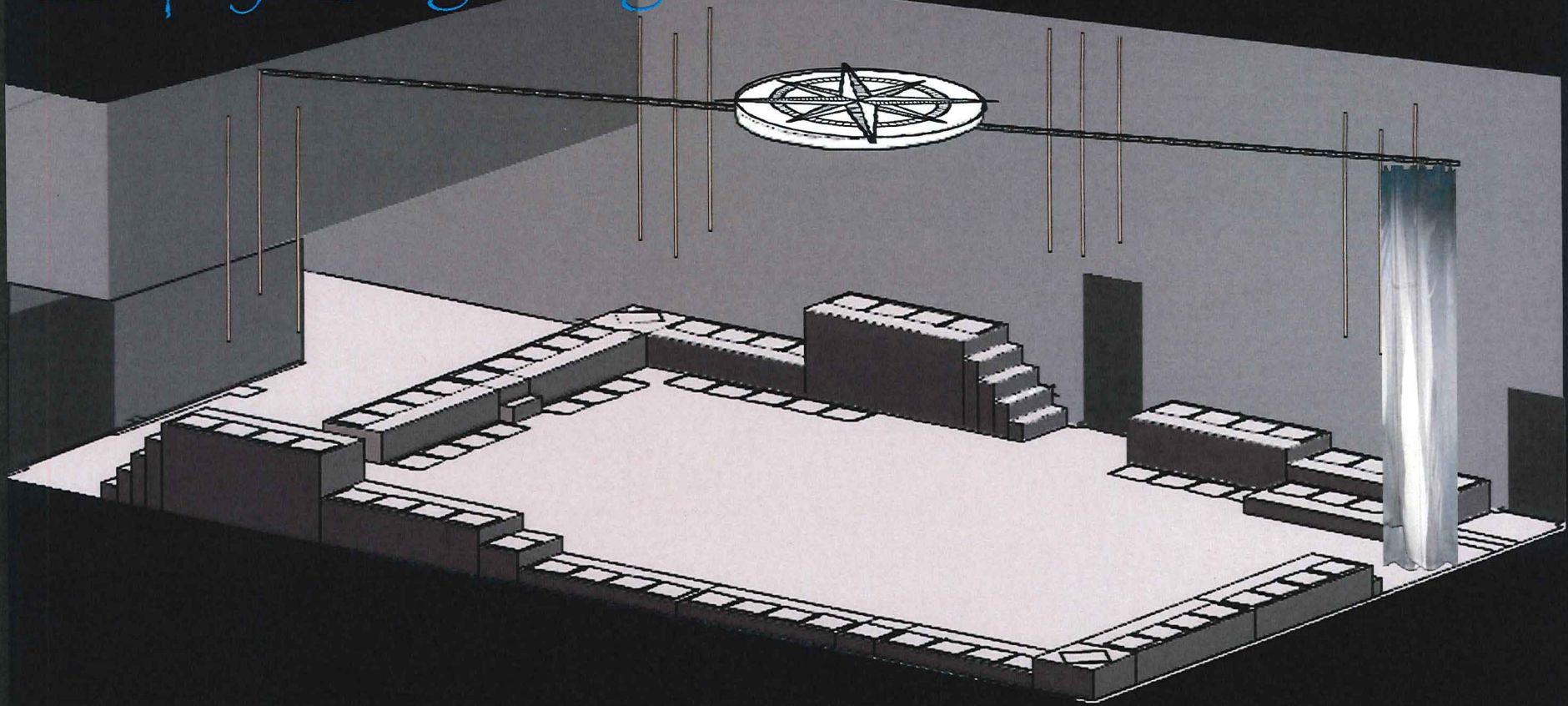


Antioch

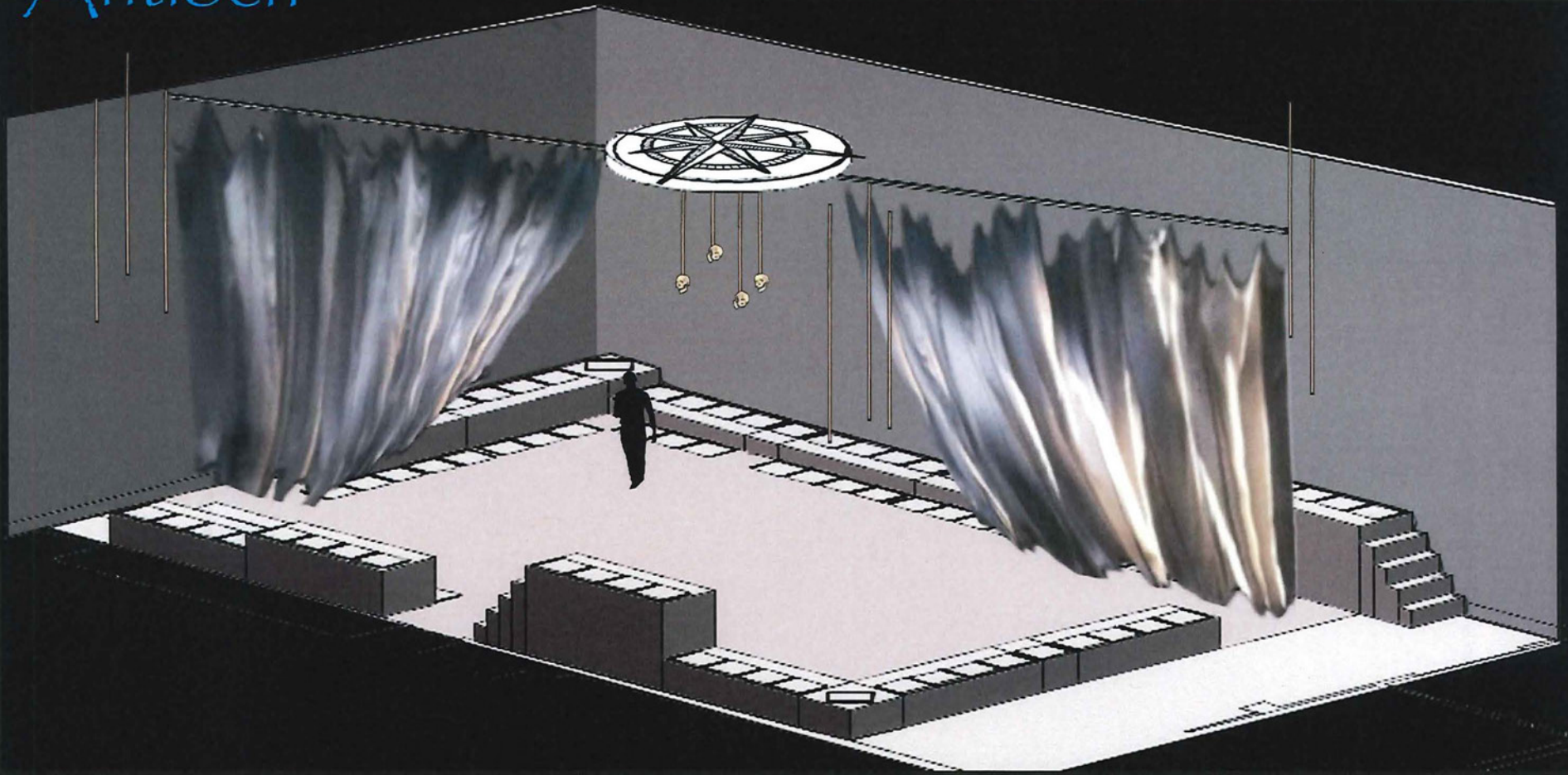




# Empty- Beginning

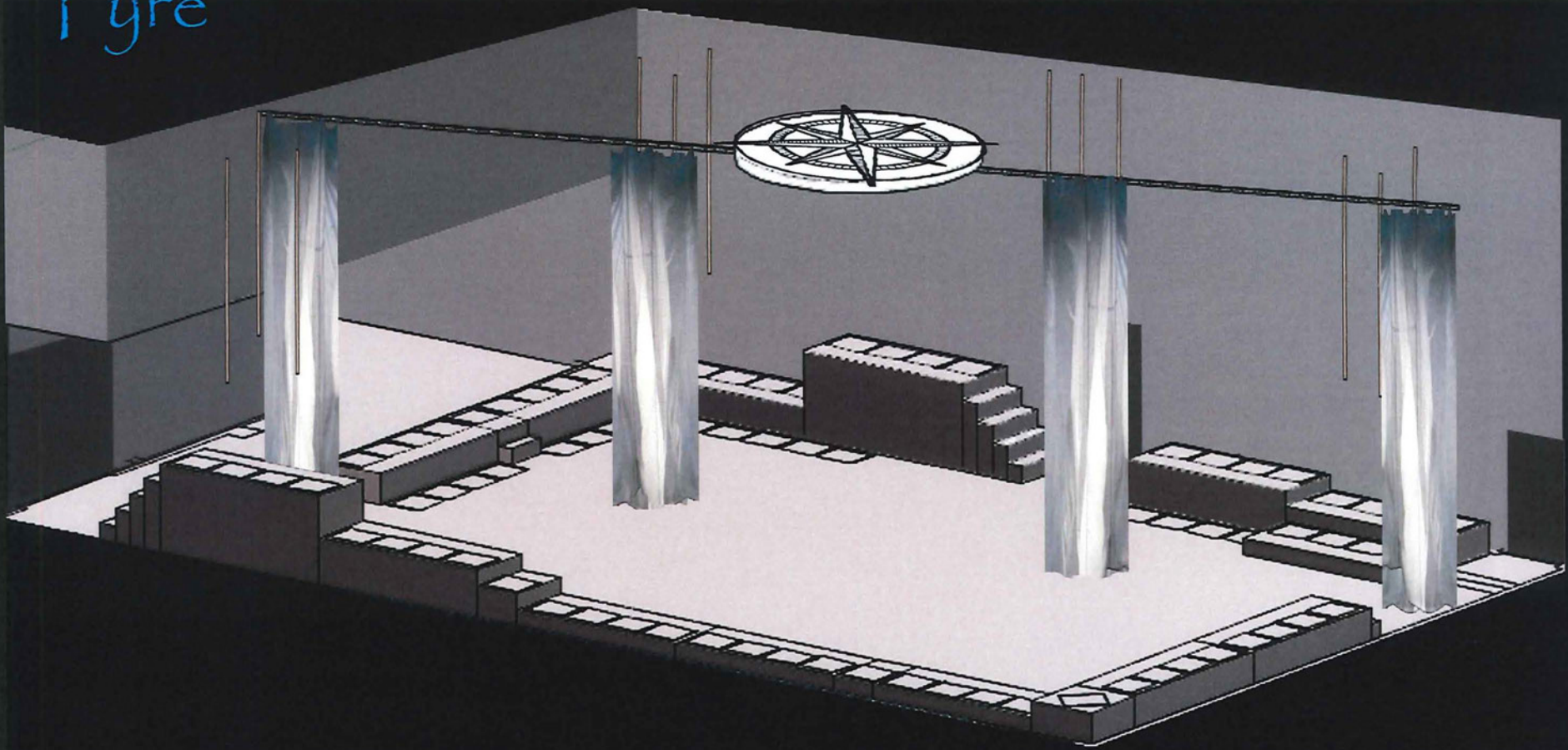


# Antioch



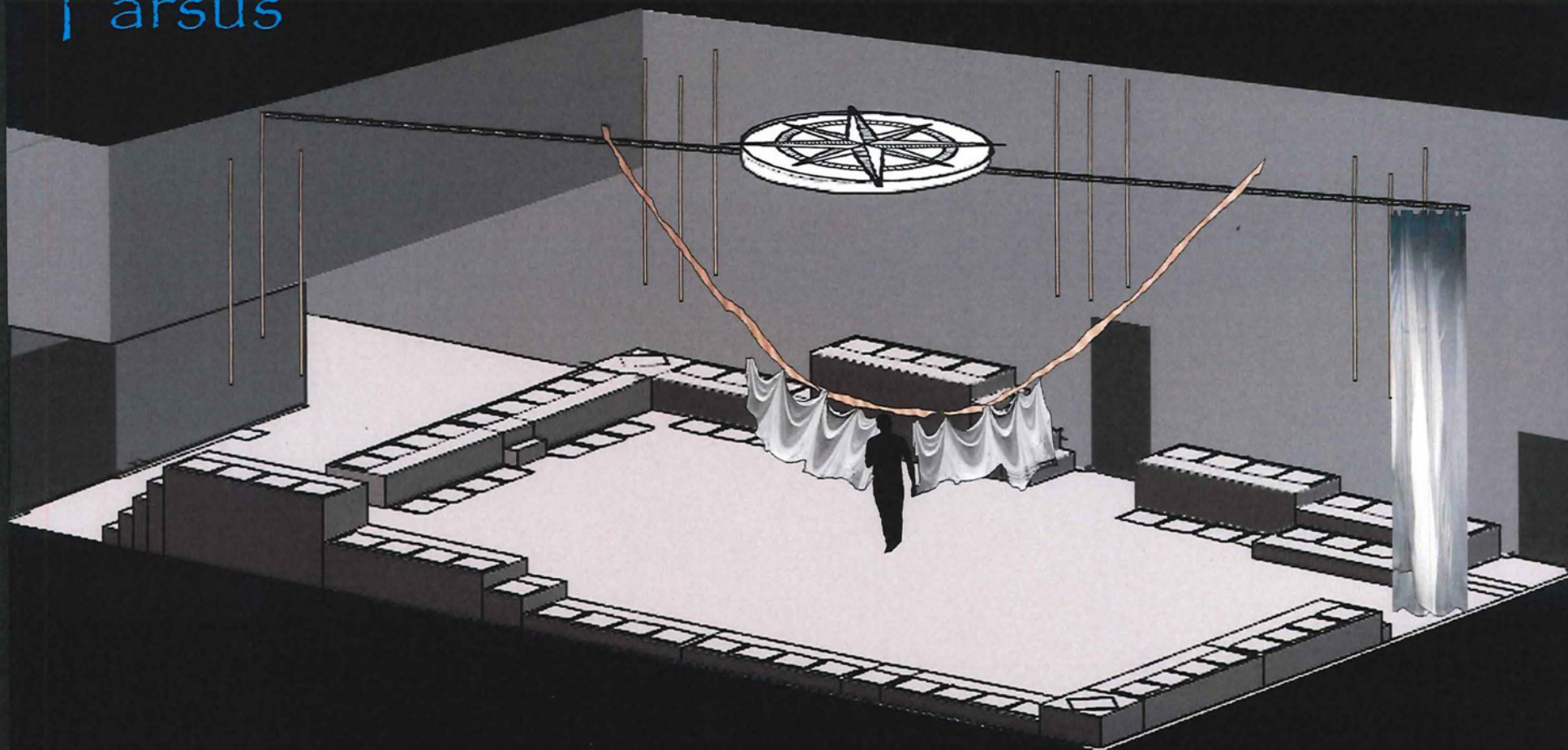


Tyre

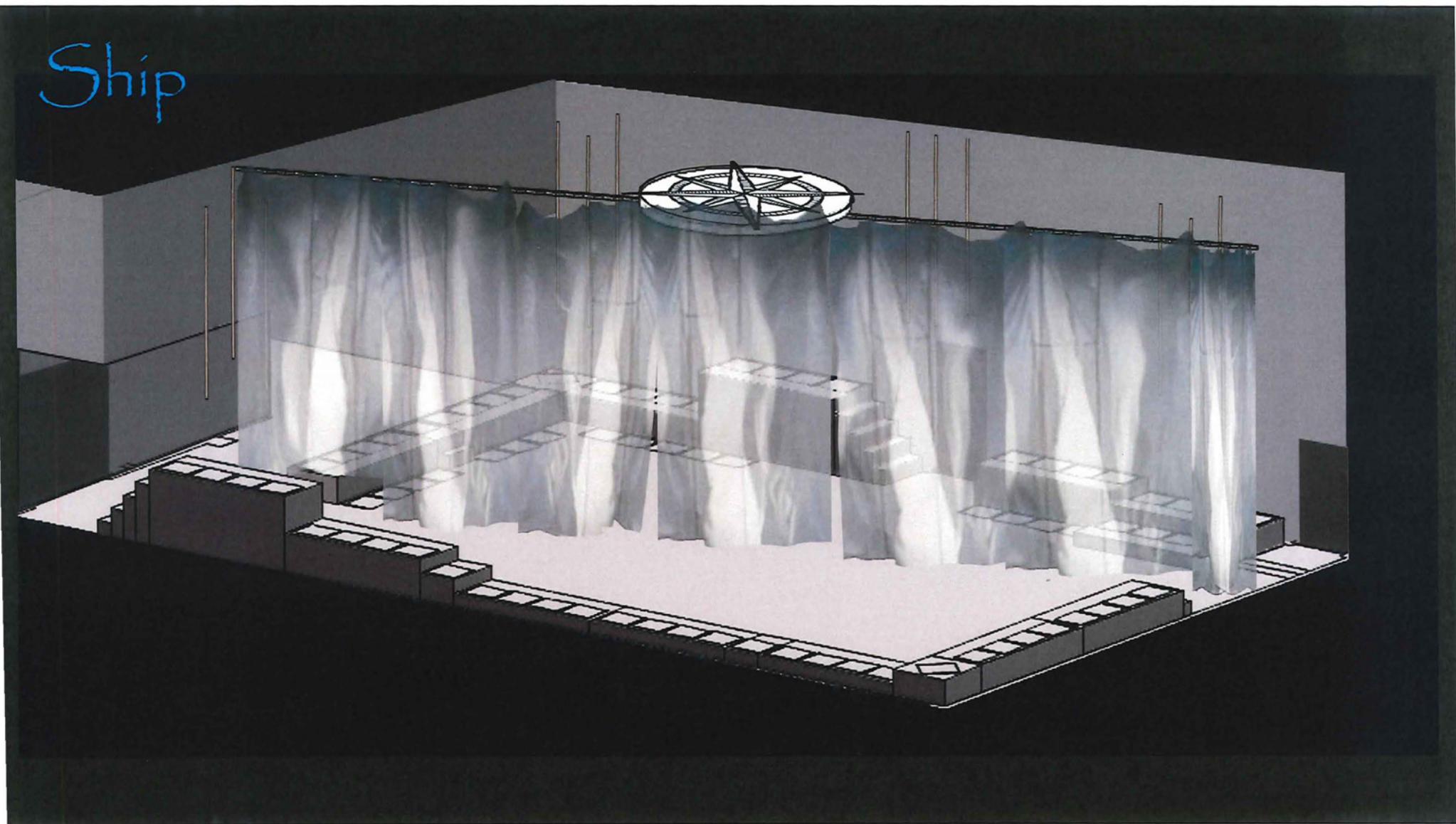




# Tarsus

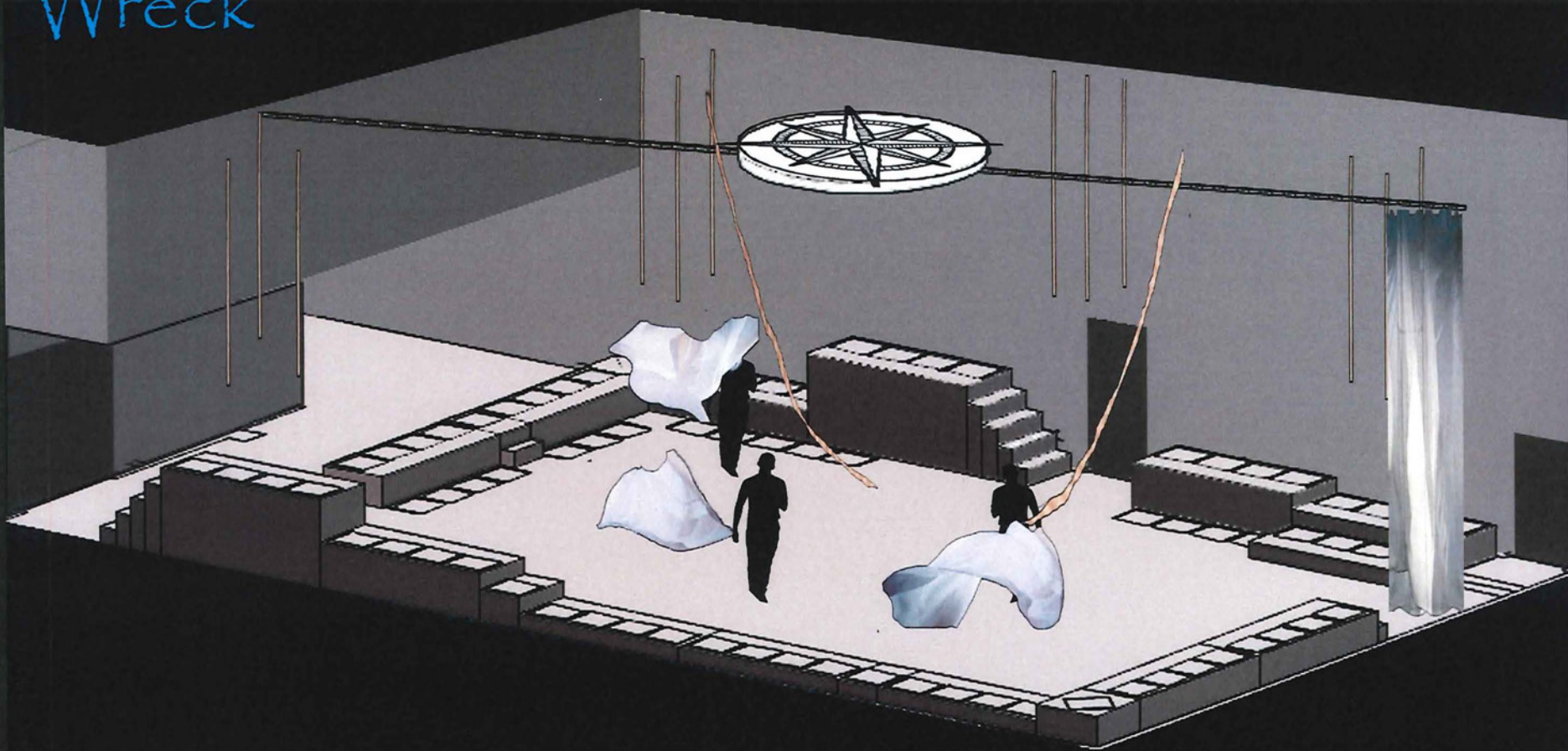


Ship

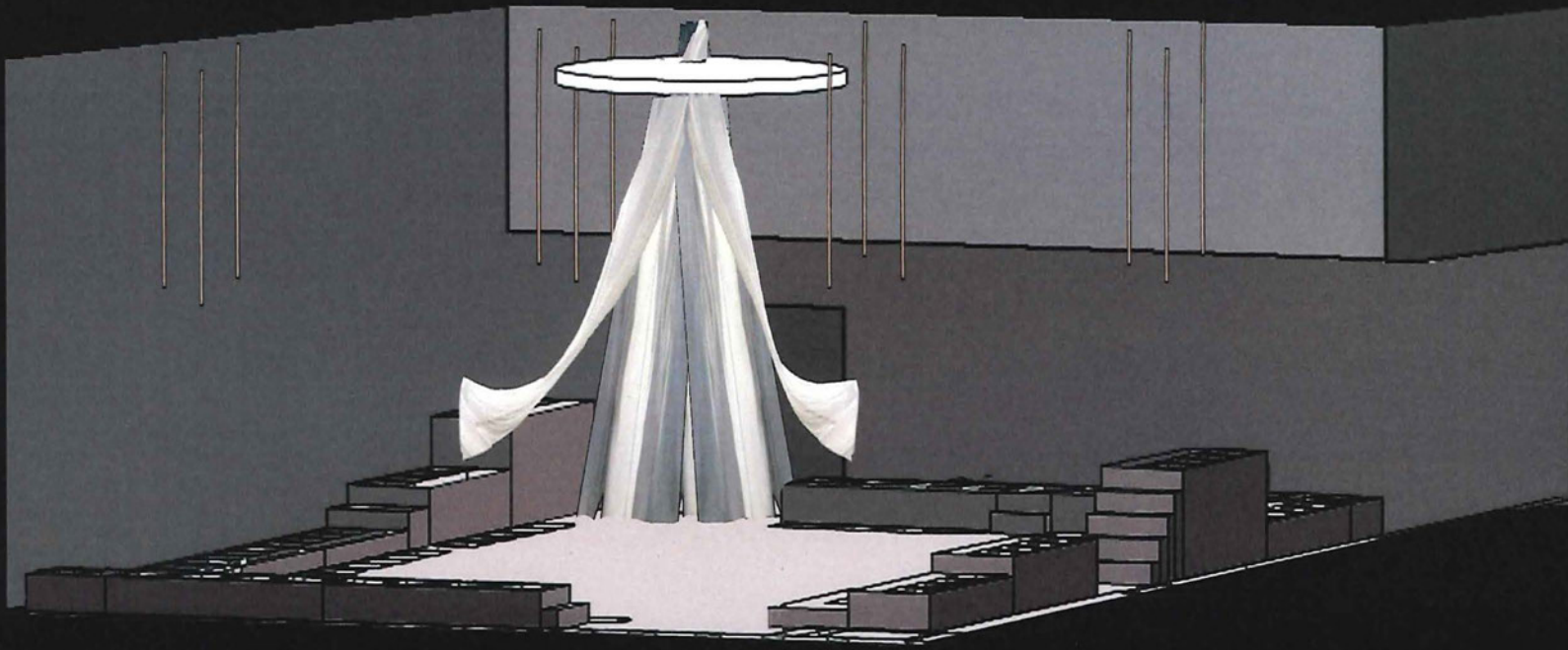




Wreck

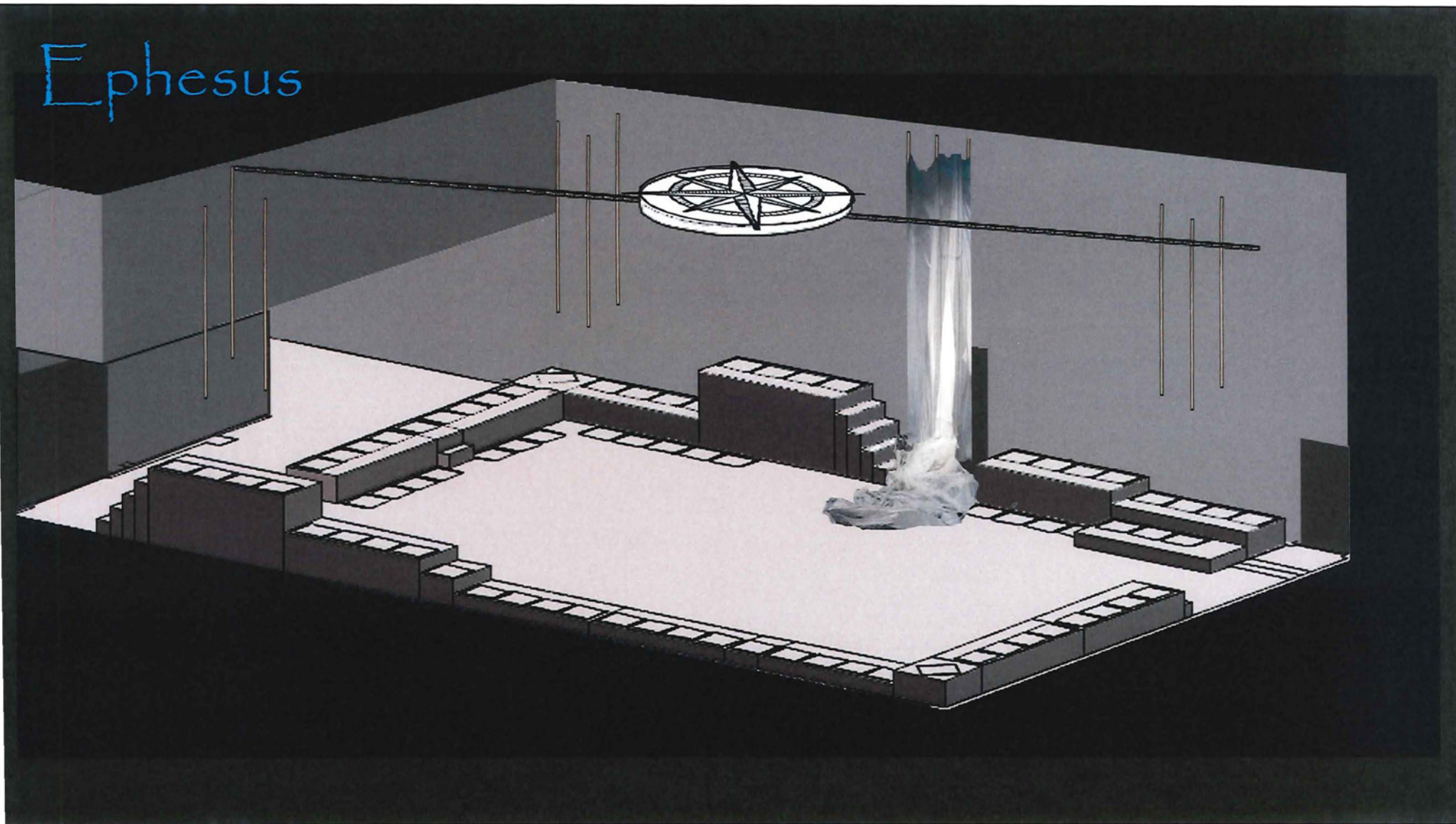


# Pentapolis

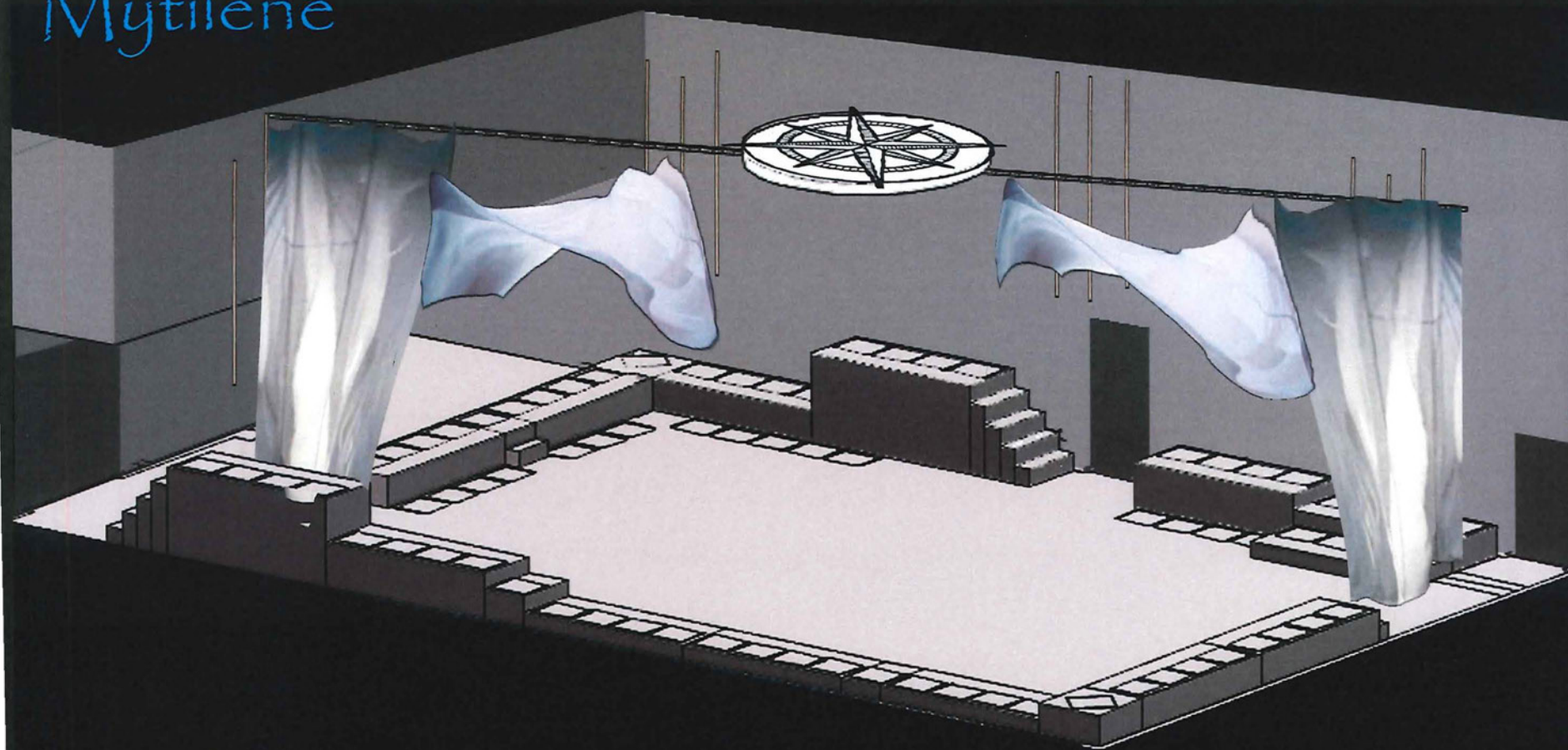




Ephesus

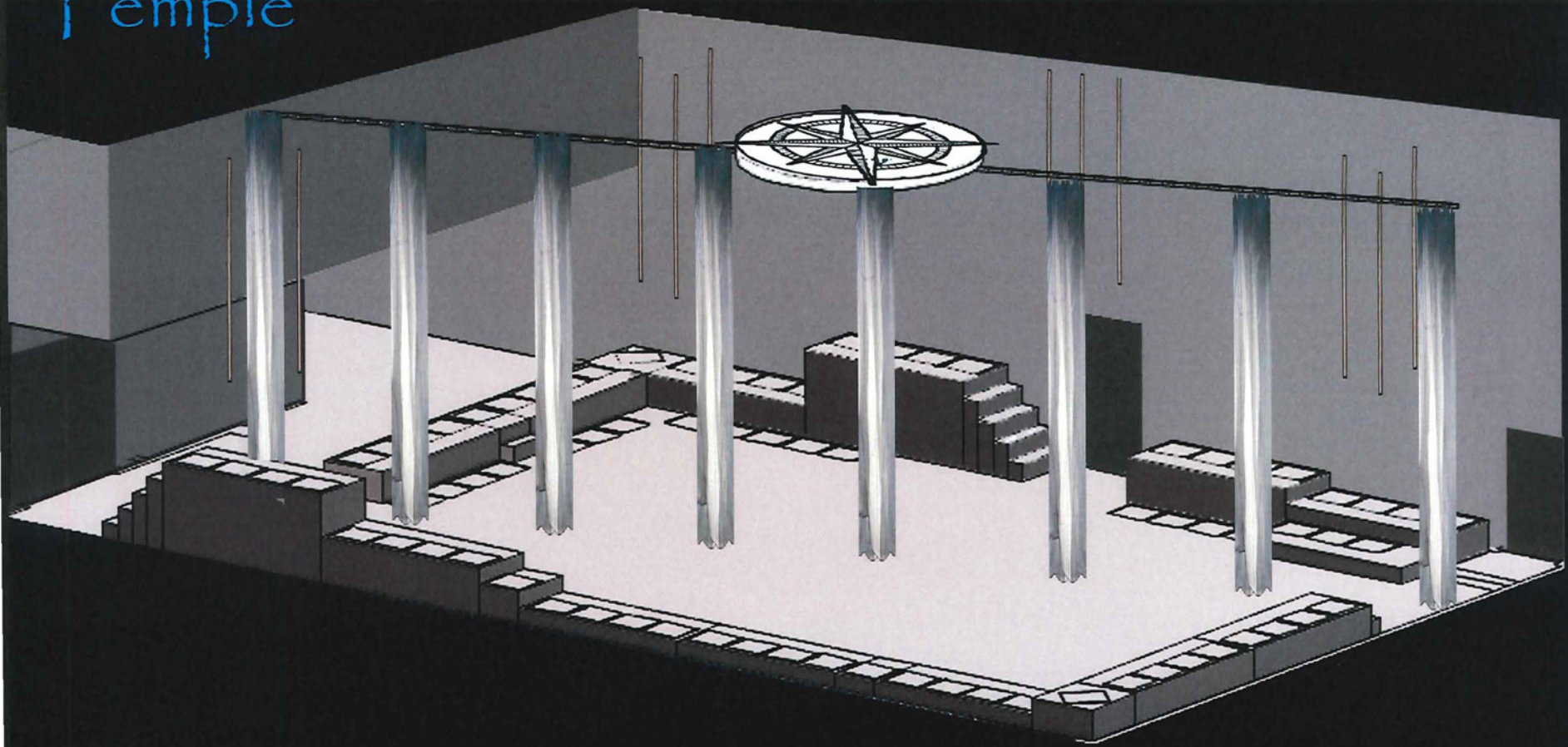


Mytilene





# Temple



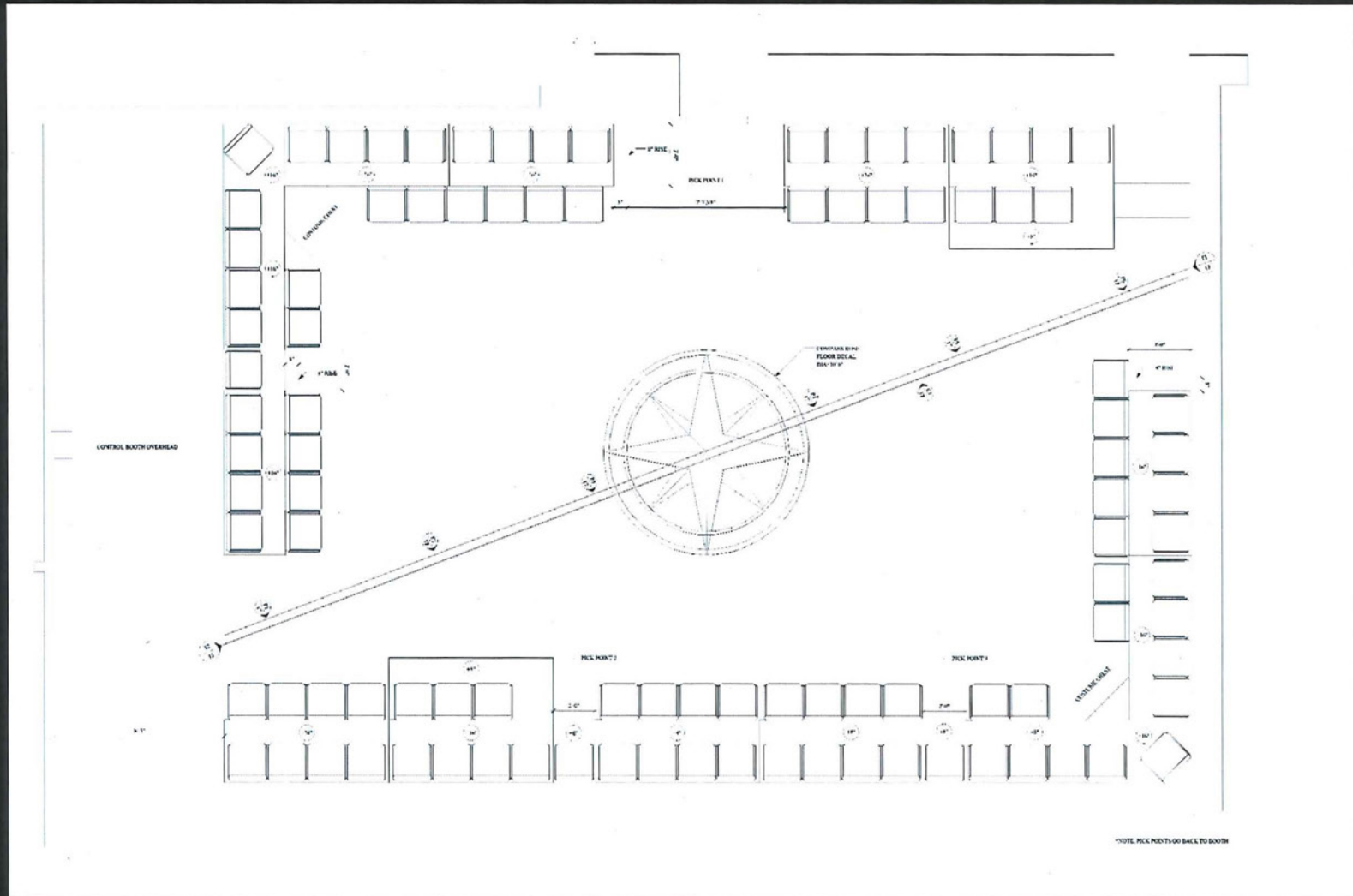
*Pericles Prince of Tyre*

Final Designs



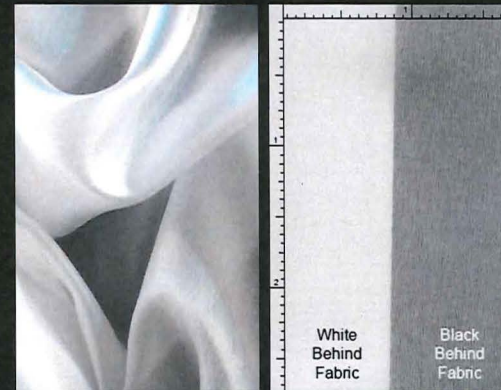
\* The following groundplan for the Final Design phase was generated from a 3D drafting packet- the final version of which will be included in the “Final Product” portion of the Capstone. The following renderings were based on photos of a  $\frac{1}{4}'' = 1'0''$  scale model I created as a visual aid for the directing and production team.

GP



# Proposed Materials:

- [https://www.dharmatrading.com/fabric/silk/silk-habotai-5mm.html?lnav=fabric\\_silk.html](https://www.dharmatrading.com/fabric/silk/silk-habotai-5mm.html?lnav=fabric_silk.html)
- <https://www.dharmatrading.com/fabric/cotton/bleached-harem-cloth-55-58-inch.html>
- [https://www.etsy.com/listing/239334570/compass-rose-with-times-font-vinyl-wall?gpla=1&gao=1&utm\\_campaign=shopping\\_us\\_KrittahStickers\\_sfc\\_osa&utm\\_medium=cpc&utm\\_source=google&utm\\_custom1=0&utm\\_content=6830416&gclid=CjwKCAiA9f7QBRBpEiwApLGUigccOJVqF\\_-cTAOXWIIISPAsuWBjOQJBQ-1DSfWygbdnbHT6QVw5hoCP54QAvD\\_BwE](https://www.etsy.com/listing/239334570/compass-rose-with-times-font-vinyl-wall?gpla=1&gao=1&utm_campaign=shopping_us_KrittahStickers_sfc_osa&utm_medium=cpc&utm_source=google&utm_custom1=0&utm_content=6830416&gclid=CjwKCAiA9f7QBRBpEiwApLGUigccOJVqF_-cTAOXWIIISPAsuWBjOQJBQ-1DSfWygbdnbHT6QVw5hoCP54QAvD_BwE)
- <http://www.knotandrope.com/store/pc/1-quot-Manila-3p7.htm>



5 - 16mm Silk Habotai



Bleached Harem Cloth



Vinyl Compass Floor Decal

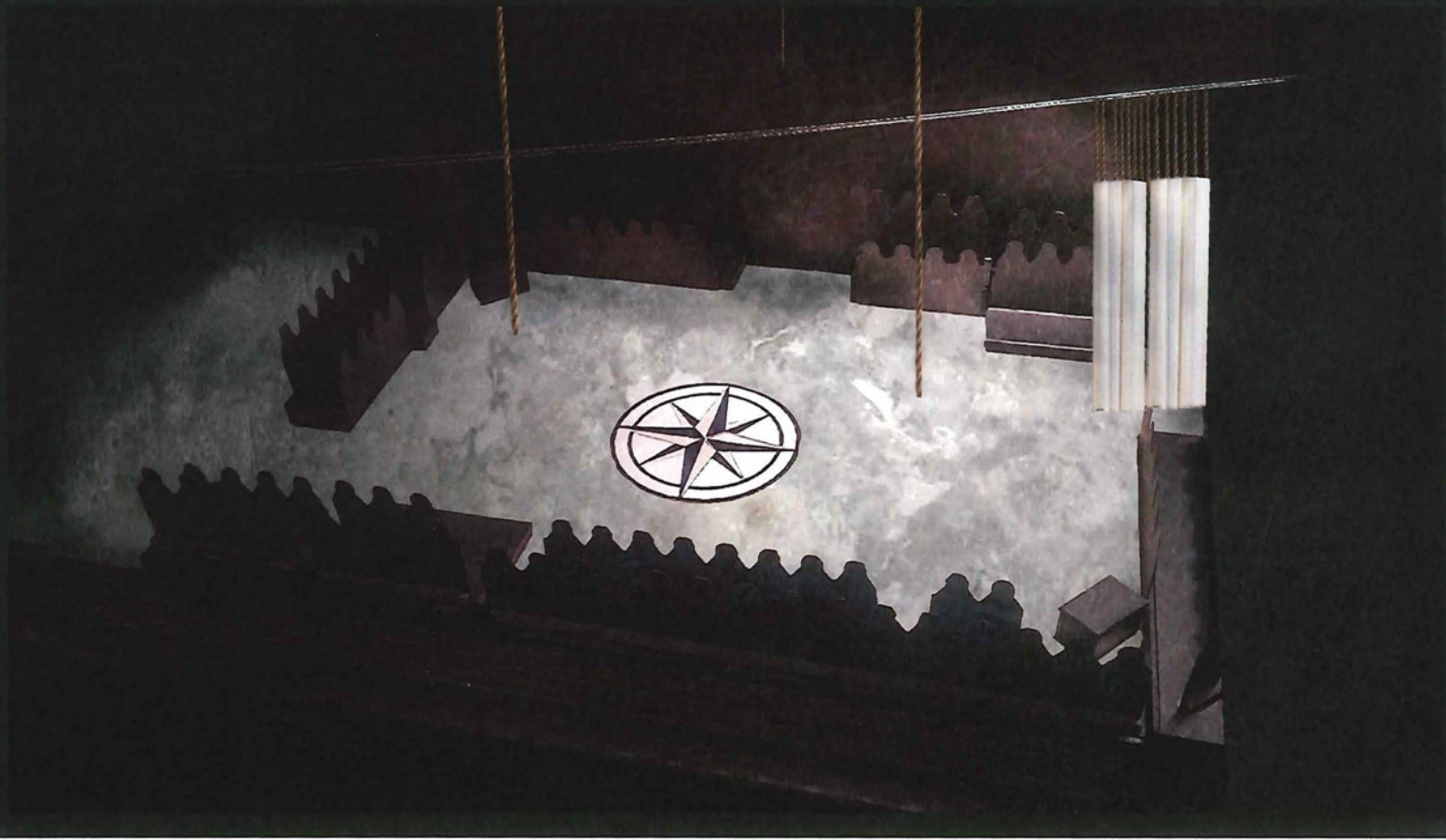


1" Manilla Rope



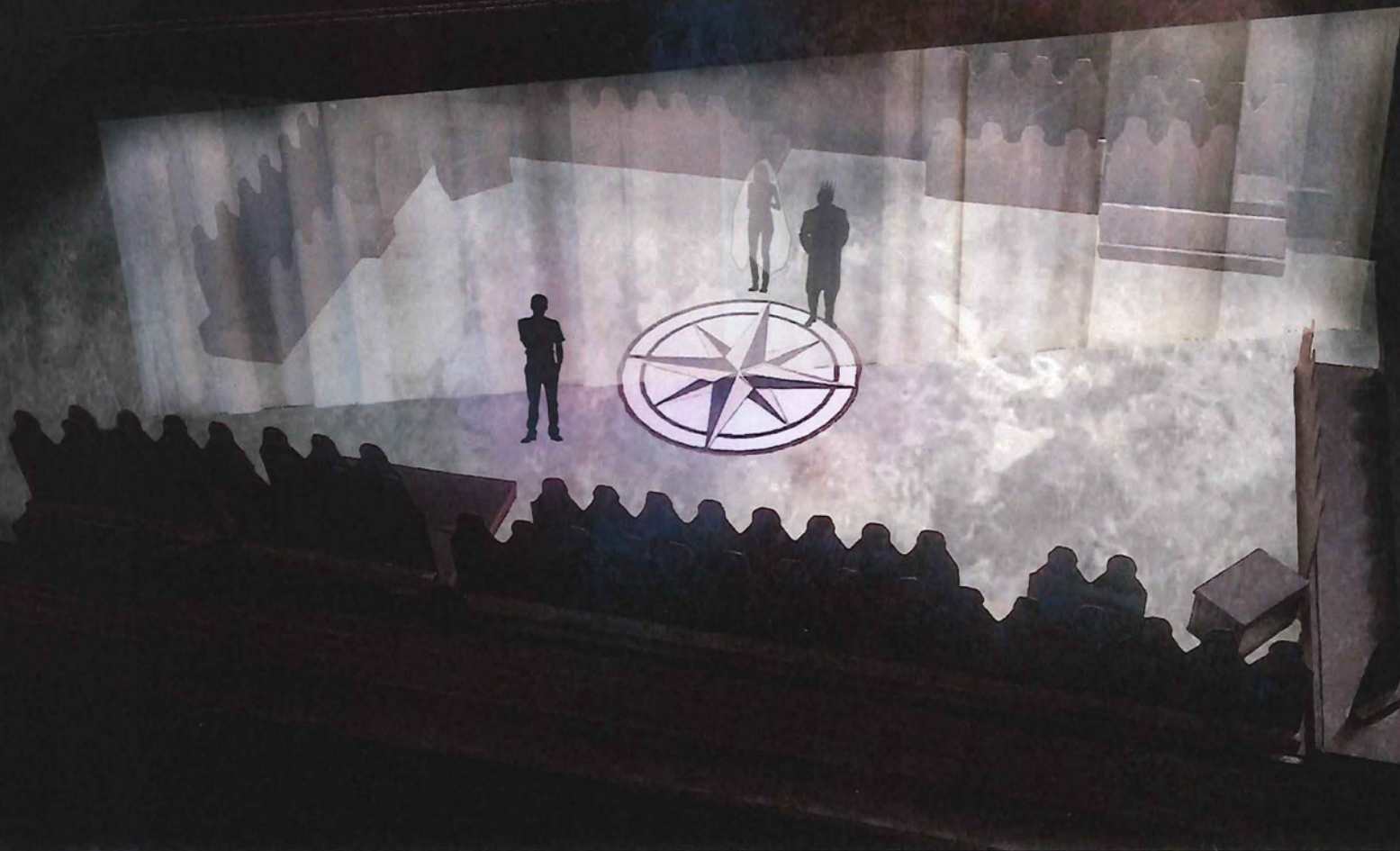
# House Open

Both Sets of curtains live in SW corner.



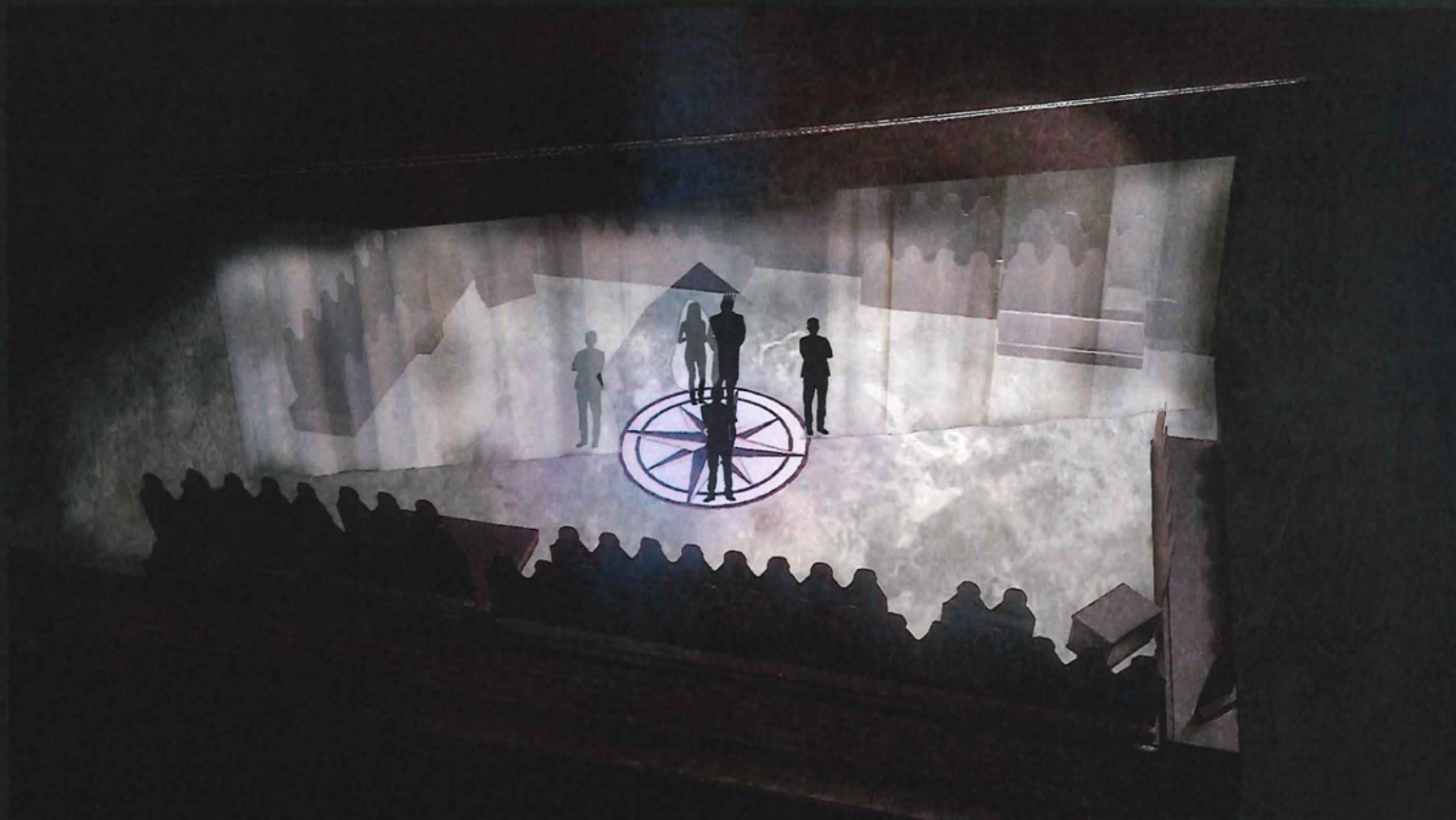


Antioch



# Antioch

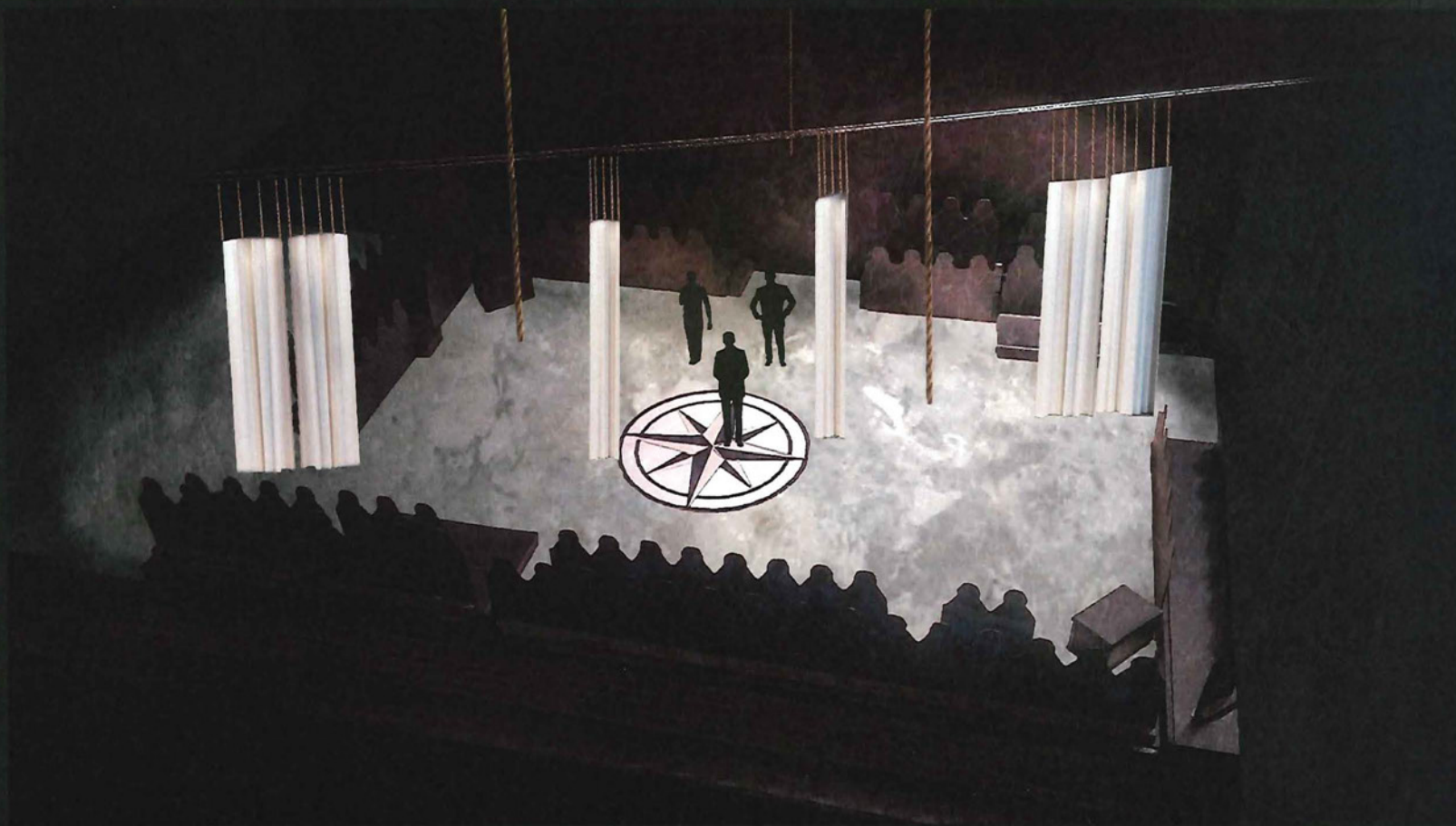
2-4 People pull large curtain across space.  
2 remain at center to open doorway, each pulling offstage from the center seam.





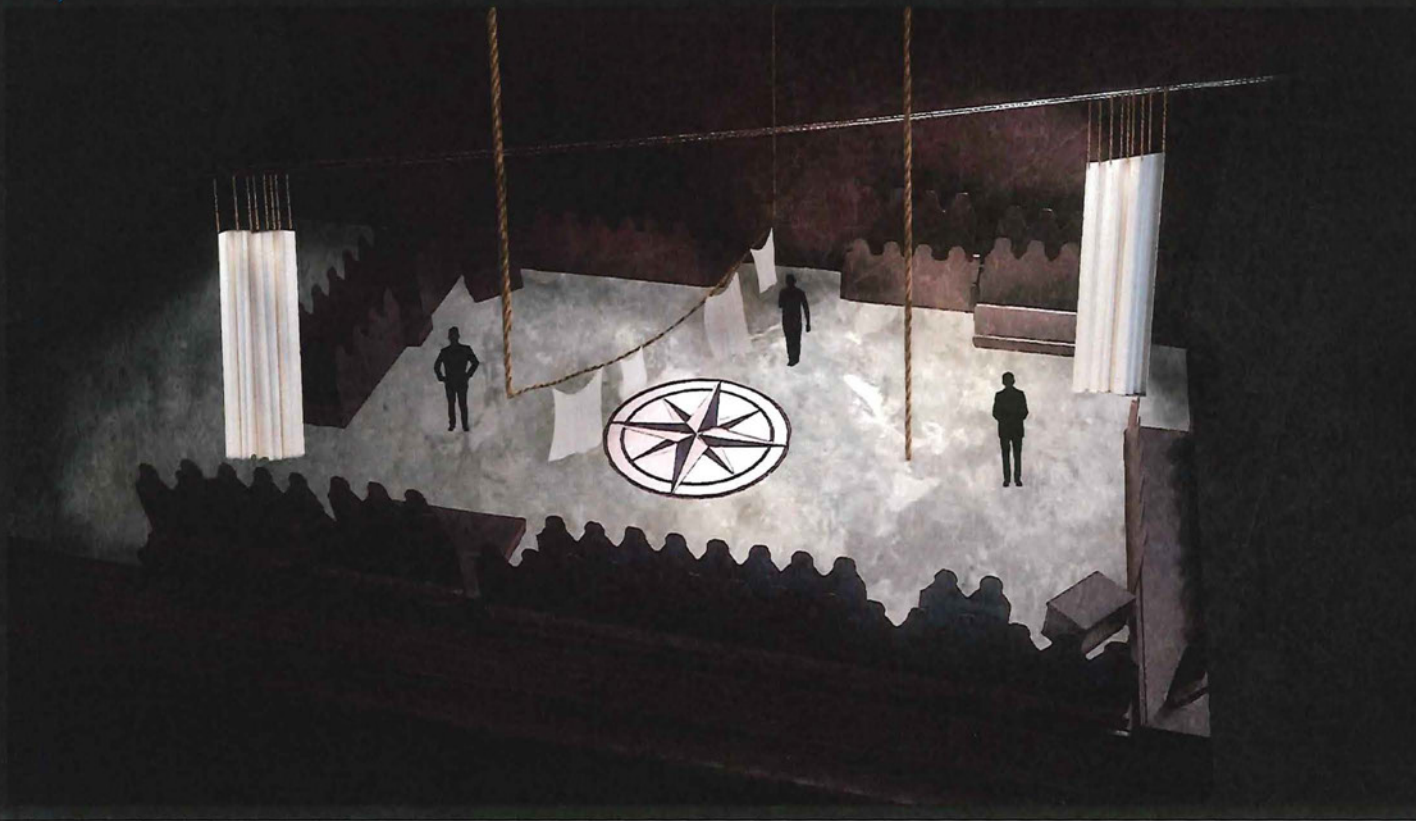
# Tyre

Moving into Tyre, 2 actors return the full-stage curtain to SW corner, while 4-6 others bring the panels to their new positions.



# Tarsus (a)- Run Down

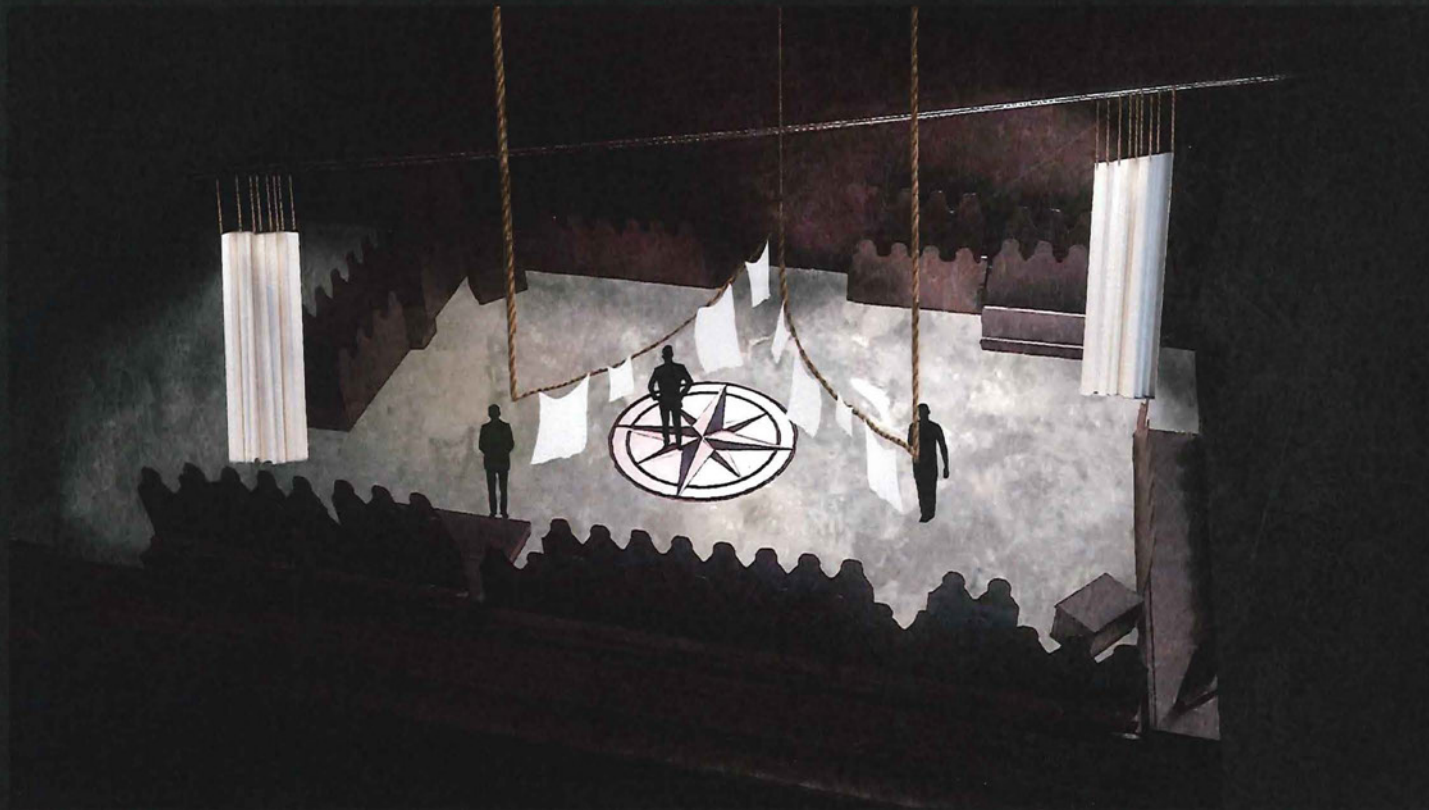
Two actors move the Tyre Panels to NE corner. Pick points are dropped in, two actors grab a coiled rope from beneath audience risers with pre-mounted sheets/costumes for the derelict Tarsus. One end is attached at Pick point one, the other is attached at Pick Point two.





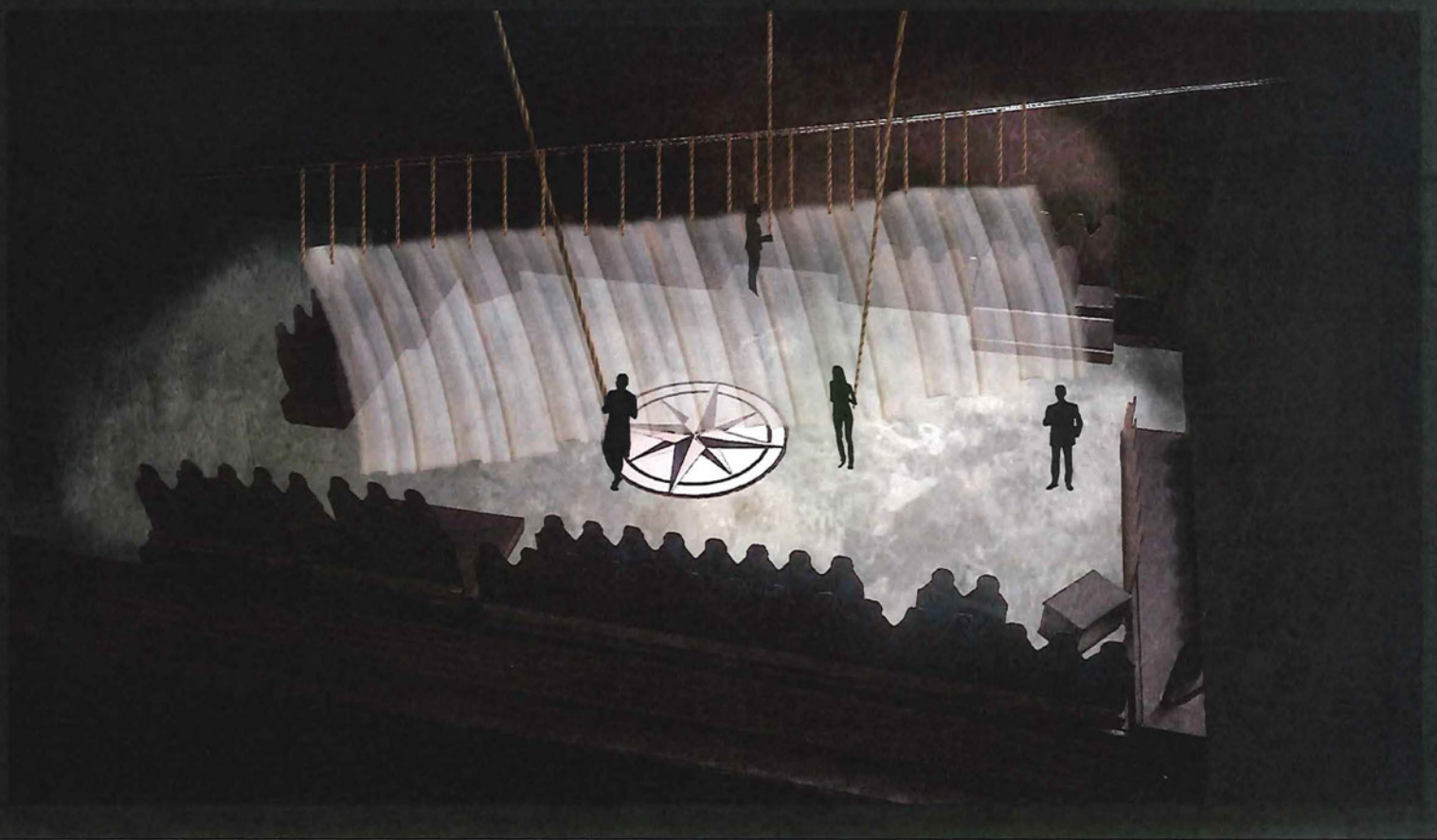
# Tarsus (b)- On the Mend

Two actors grab another coiled rope from beneath audience risers with pre-mounted sheets/ costumes for the rejuvenated Tarsus. One end is attached at Pick point one, the other is attached at Pick Point three.



# Shipwreck-

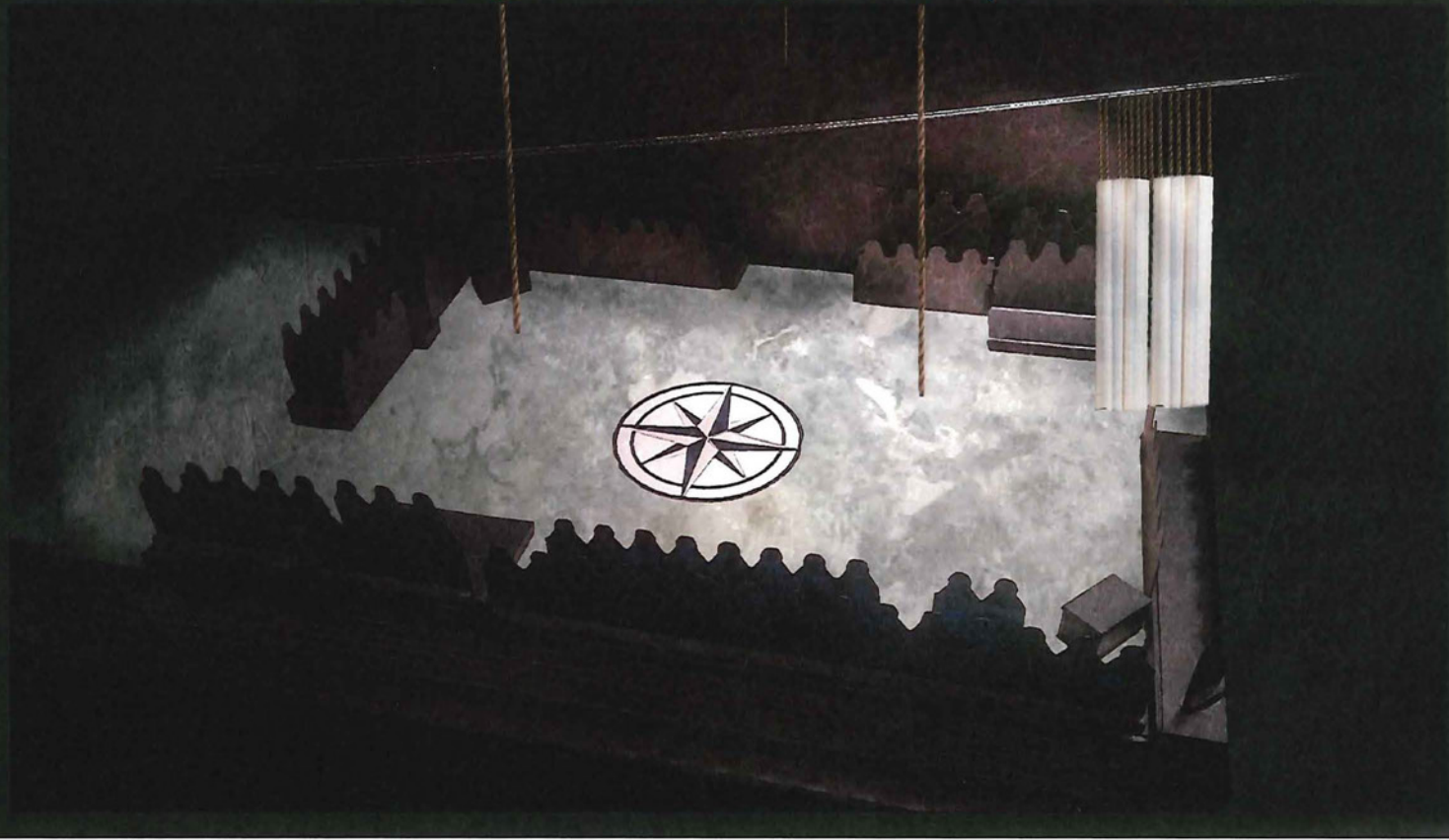
Fabric is pulled from clotheslines and used as waves, as the clotheslines are removed from the pickpoints by 4 actors, and taken offstage or stored again beneath the risers. The pick points remain in their down position, to be used as ship's ropes during the storm sequence. Three more pull the full stage curtain to the N.E. corner.

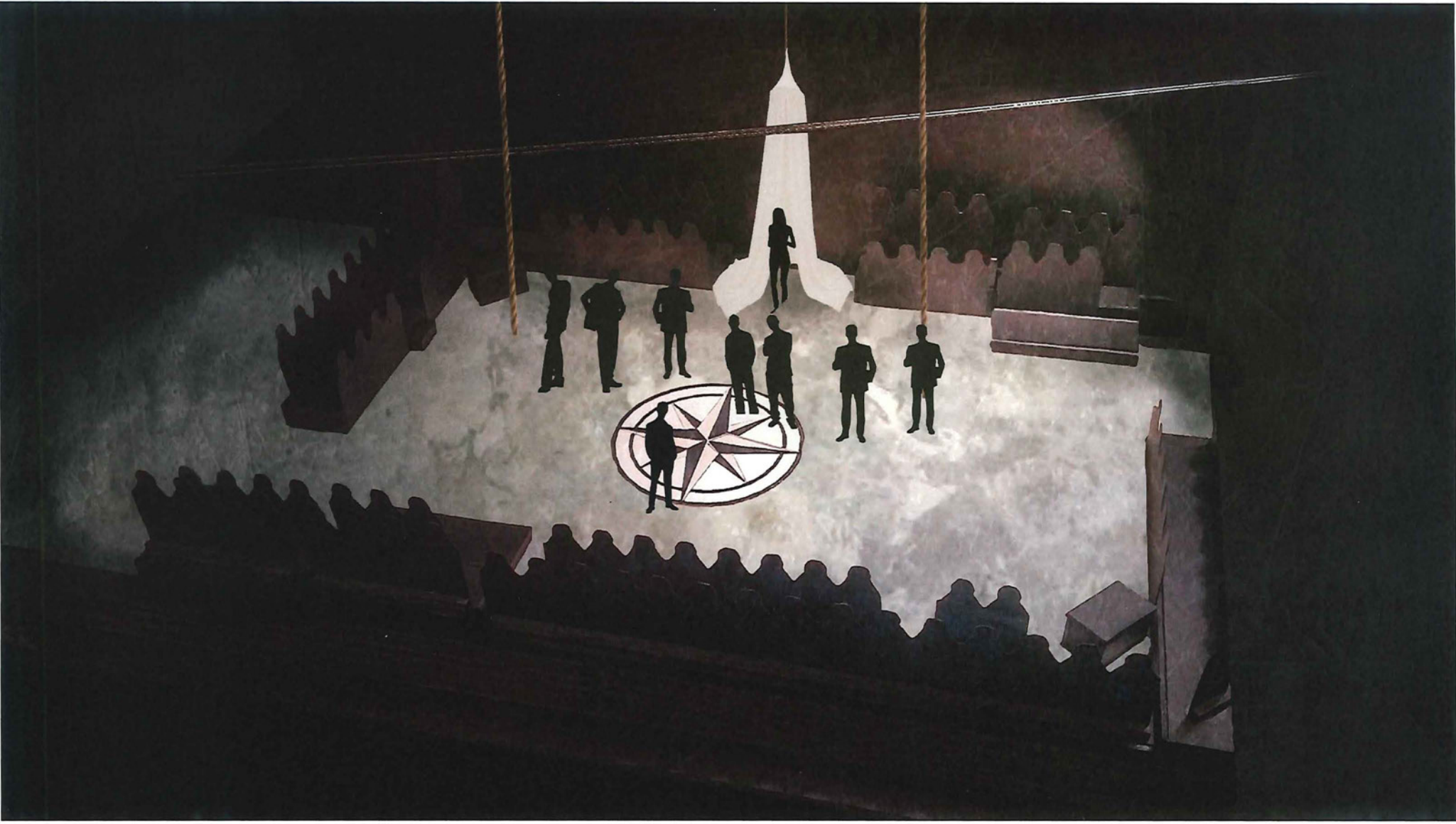




# Shore of Pentapolis

At the end of the storm, pick points two and three are raised. We have emptied the space, except for the fabric actors use as waves crashing ashore, washing Pericles up on land out of the SW stairs.

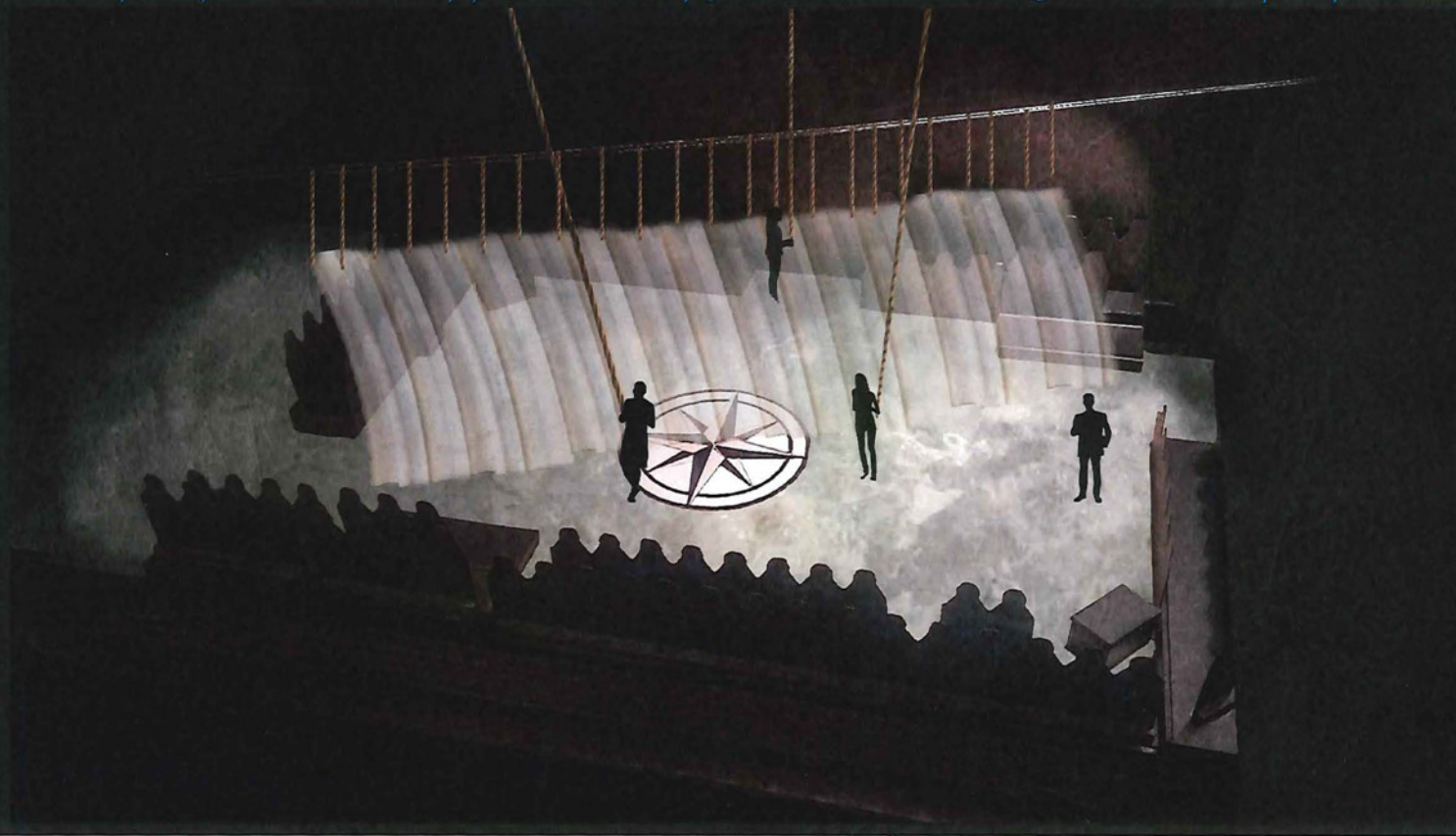






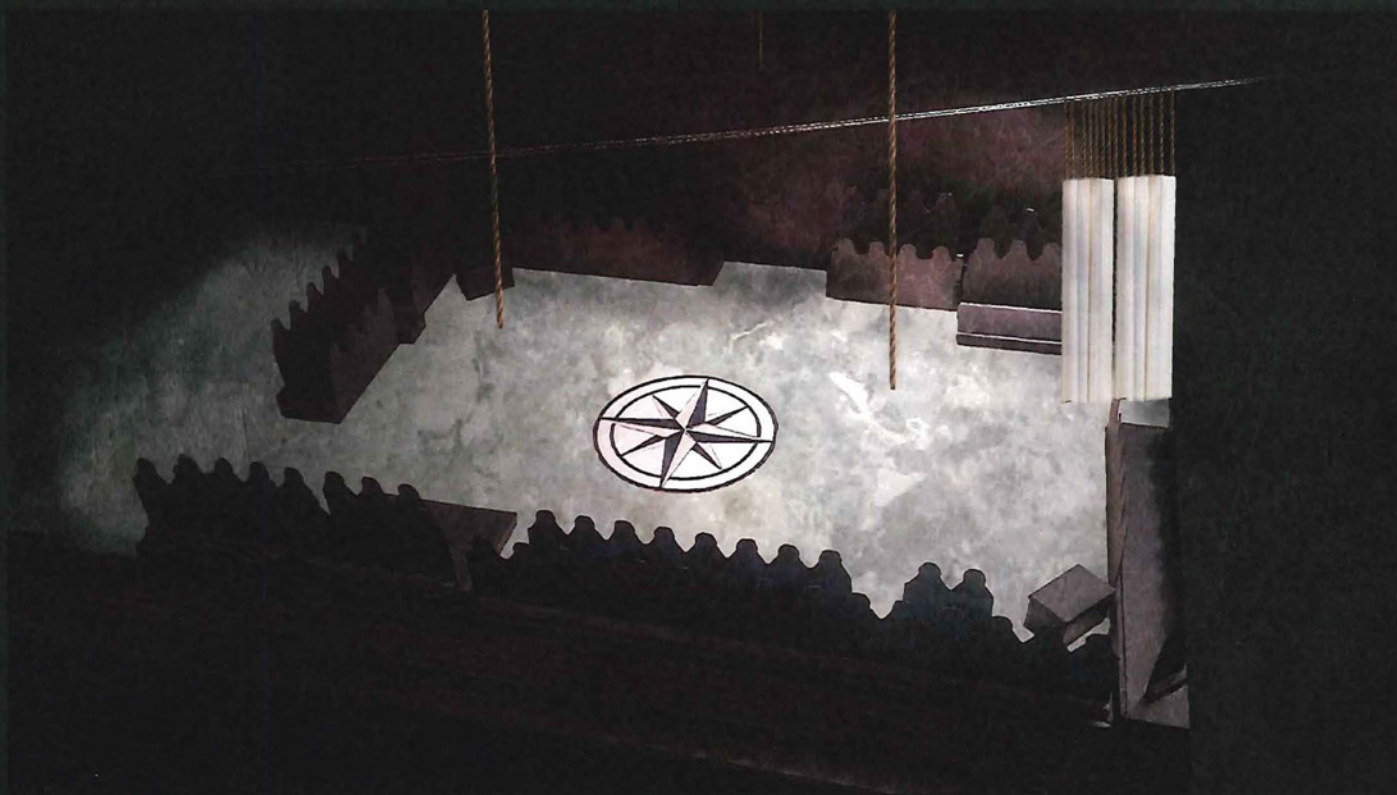
# Shipwreck 2~

Actors return Tyre Panels to southwest corner, as the full curtain is ran on, savagely tossing in the storm. All three pick points are dropped in, canopy removed, and they become ship ropes once more.



# Ephesus

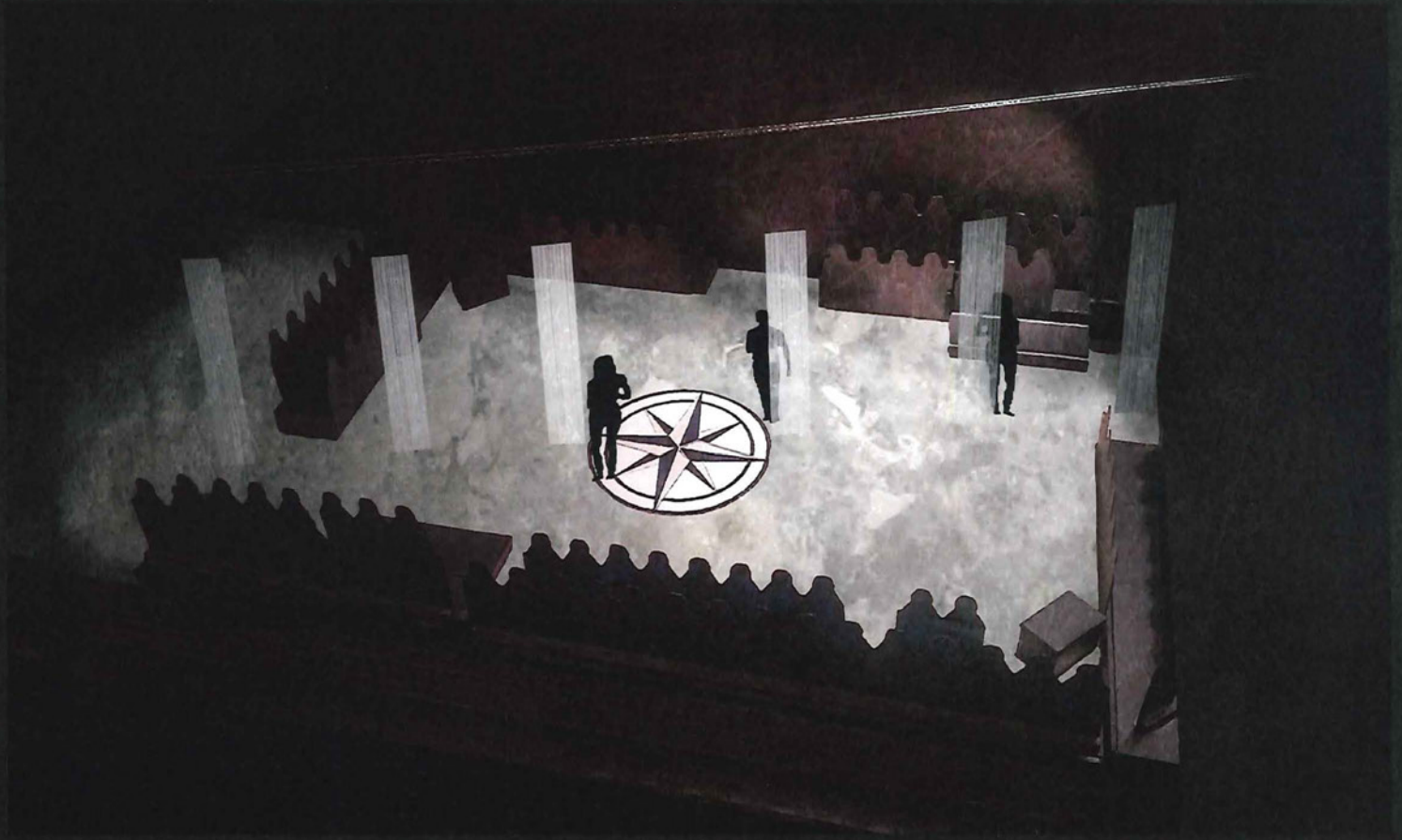
Calm after the storm, all three pick points are gently returned to their raised position and the fullstage curtain is brought calmly back to the S.W. corner.





# Temple

Pick points are raised as all six panels on track a are brought out to create a line of columns. The columns are cleared away symmetrically as Pericles makes his way to Thaisa and their reunion center atop the compass rose.



THANK YOU



Archive Photo  
Photo Credit: Kip Shawger





Archive Photo  
Photo Credit: Kip Shawger







Archive Photo  
Photo Credit: Kip Shawger





Archive Photo  
Photo Credit: Kip Shawger



